

Matthew 22:15-33

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[0:00] Good morning. You know, we've sung, this is, I haven't got notes for this, this is off the cuff. We sung this morning in so many ways about the Lord being magnificent and his name being lifted up and how he has come and he has dealt with our sins.

And what we are going to read about this morning is the knowing response of the Jews to their Messiah. That he had shown them in every way that he was their Messiah. He'd fulfilled all their own teachings to their people. He'd done everything that they taught Messiah would come and do. And their response to him, I mean, it's we could start with what it says in Matthew 1 verse 21, which is he came to save his people from their sins.

An act of amazing love. But then in Matthew 12, they said he was working by the power of Satan. And he said at that point, this is not going to be forgiven that you attribute the work that he has done by the Holy Spirit in confirming the scriptures is attributing it.

They are attributing it to Satan. And he said that would not be forgiven. But what you see, what we're going to look at now is a passage of scripture.

[1:21] We're going to do some of it this week and some of it next week where they are busy trying to trap him. They're taking somebody who's done nothing but love them.

And they're trying to trap him so that they can unjustly convict him of something. Now, you may remember last time we came up to the end of three parables through which Jesus let the Jews know very clearly that they were a long way from heaven.

He said to them, you know, actually, the tax gatherers and the prostitutes are going to get into heaven ahead of you. And you may also recall from previous sessions that they had a method of investigating potential messiahs.

And it started with what they called the observation phase where they would simply watch and see whether this person really was a contender for the role of the long awaited and long expected messiah.

Then they would follow that up with the interrogation phase. And in the interrogation phase, they would ask questions of the doctrine that they taught.

[2:37] And they would also ask questions of their conduct. Why did you do this? Why did you do that? And so they had these two sections of investigation to verify that somebody was or was not the messiah.

But this was a process that was a bit open to corruption, because if you set out wanting to prove somebody isn't the messiah, then you ask the sort of questions that trap them.

And you're not really interested just in facts. What you're interested in doing is putting them in a political corner and thereby justifying their hatred towards them or their execution in this case.

And we must remember that this that we're dealing with this morning is a couple of days before his death. So he is right on the cusp of going to the cross and they are asking questions.

And it's not a new tactic. You may remember back in chapter 21, verses 23 to 27, they tried to trap him there with the question about under whose authority are you doing these things?

[3:49] But he very, very skillfully avoided answering that question by saying, well, if you answer my question, then I'll answer yours. And he put them in exactly the same dilemma they wanted.

He was in this position where if he had said, I'm doing it by the power of God, that would have been treated as blasphemy. If he said, I'm doing it in my own strength, that too would have been treated as blasphemy because you've got a man doing stuff that God was supposed to do.

So it was a question to which there was no right answer. But he asked them a similar question. So he put them in an identical dilemma.

So let's then turn to Matthew 22 and verse 15. And I'm going to try to cover through to verse 33. But if I don't get there, I'll just pick it up next week because it's a lot to cover, but it all fits together.

So ideally, I would deliver it as one study. So verse 15. Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap him in what he said.

[5:00] And they sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians saying, teacher, we know that you are truthful and teach the way of God in truth and defer to no one for you are not partial to any.

Tell us then, what do you think? Is it lawful to give a poll tax to Caesar or not? But Jesus perceived their malice and said, why are you testing me, you hypocrites?

Show me the coin used for the poll tax. And they brought to him a denarius. And he said to them, whose likeness and inscription is this? They said to him, Caesar's.

Then he said to them, then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. And hearing this, they were amazed and leaving him, they went away. Now, I'm going to deal with that passage that we've just read before we move on to the next part.

So. Why would they want to trap someone who'd done so much for them? And why would they doubt that he was Messiah? And the answer to this is a rhetorical question.

[6:08] They didn't really doubt that he was Messiah. They just didn't want Messiah in their midst at that time because their corruption was so rife. They didn't want to lose their income. But the malice with which they pursued him.

And here they're trying to trap him with his words. They're trying to get him to say stuff that they can trap him with because he's either he's either spoken against Rome or spoken against the Jews. And if he speaks against Rome, that will bring Rome down on his head. And if he speaks against the Jews, that will bring the Jews, the religious Jews up against him. Give them a reason to put him before the courts.

Note the obsequious tones. Obsequious means creeping or crawling, you know. Such a nice guy, really. It says in verse 16, we know that you are truthful and teach the way of God in truth and defer to no one for you are not partial to any.

It's all very just creeping around you, trying to soften you up to ask you then an awkward question. It was utterly insincere.

[7:18] Because in verse 18, it says Jesus perceived their malice. And says, why are you testing me, you hypocrite? So the question is, do you think it is lawful to give a poll tax to Caesar or not?

Now, if he had given an unqualified yes, he then would have been seen as anti-Israel. And the Jews hated him anyway. They also hated paying taxes to the Romans.

They were an oppressed nation. Yet they were still a proud nation. So for him to say, yes, of course, it's lawful. Pay your taxes to Rome would have got right up their nose, frankly.

And he would have been seen as supporting the regime that oppressed the Jews. But if he'd said no, he might well have been arrested. You must remember, we just read that the Herodians were there, too.

This wasn't just the leaders of Israel, but the Herodians were there. So he might well have been arrested and possibly even subsequently executed because he would have been seen as speaking against Rome.

[8:26] Of course, it's not lawful to pay taxes to the Romans. Oh, they would have all gathered around him. The men would have come from the Antonia Fortress and grabbed him. And that could have been the end of that.

Jesus was too clever for that. And I love the way, you know, there's a verse in Proverbs. I can't remember where in Proverbs because it wasn't part of my notes. But there's a verse in Proverbs that says the man has set a trap and his own foot is caught in it.

They set these questions for Jesus and put themselves in a corner instead of Jesus. It kind of backfired. Why are you testing me, you hypocrites?

And they had feigned this reverence in order to present this question. And Jesus saw straight through it and says, show me the coin for the poll tax. And they brought him a denarius. A denarius was a day's wage for the average worker or for a soldier.

Interestingly, scribes were paid two denarii per day. But the poll tax was a payment to Rome just to allow you to continue to exist in one of Rome's provinces.

[9:36] And it was, in fact, a bit like our own taxes. It was a payment to Rome for whatever Rome did for you. Now, some would argue Rome didn't do an awful lot for that tax. But that's a separate argument.

They did offer military protection, for example. So in the sense that the Caesar would have minted coins with his own head on it.

And that those coins which become your daily wage and you use for your transactions, what they would say is we're looking after you as a nation. So you owe a poll tax to us.

So this money, at least in theory, belonged to Caesar. It didn't belong to the people. It belonged to Caesar. Just like some of your money doesn't belong to you.

It belongs to the tax man once you've earned a certain amount. And we're all delighted to give it to the tax man, I'm sure. I say that just in case anybody's listening in.

[10:39] So in that sense, and the Greek here is slightly ambiguous because the same word for payment also means a repayment. So in one sense, paying your tax to Caesar, you were repaying Caesar for services rendered.

The money belonged to Caesar. So it was not only lawful. Now, one could argue about the amounts and whether it was fair. That's a separate argument. The paying of taxes to Caesar was not just a requirement, but it was something which in other parts of the New Testament you're told to pay your taxes.

So in asking whose image is on the coin and they say Caesar's, it indicates that the coin actually belonged to Caesar and was owed to him.

That is my tax money. That coin there is my tax money. Whose image is on it? Caesar's. Well, go and give it to Caesar then. Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's or repay to Caesar what is owed to Caesar.

But then repay to God what is his. Caesar minted the coins. Who minted the souls? To whom do the souls belong?

[11:59] Now, in one sense, everything that was minted belonged to Caesar. Because he had his name on it and because it was the currency of the day for the whole area.

So everything that was minted was minted at Caesar's request and demand. And in one sense, all coins belong to him. To whom do all souls belong?

It's Jesus. So what he's saying here is render to Caesar what is his and to God what is God's. Whose image is on you?

You're made in the image of God. So render your soul to God. You bear his image. We are image bearers of God. So that leaves us asking.

So why were they amazed? Because it says, doesn't it, at the end of that little passage, it says. Verse 22. And hearing this, they were amazed and leaving him, they went away.

[12:58] Why were they amazed at his answer? Well, I can only think. Well, I think of two things. One is it was such a skillful way he avoided the trap. And I think that would have amazed.

Because there must have been people in the crowd thinking, they've got him here. He can't get out of this one. And he very skillfully kept church and state separate. And he honored and respected the state.

But he also honored God and gave correct teaching to them about where their soul should be bound and to whom they should submit.

So not happy with that. We'll go on to the next part. Verse 23.

Now, the Sadducees.

[15:09] There's a very, very old and not particularly good joke that, you know, they didn't believe there was a resurrection. And that's what made them sad, you see. It would have been wrong of me to leave that out.

And even more wrong to expect a laugh in return. But this speaks, the Sadducees here. First of all, let's understand the Sadducees.

The Sadducees were people. And, you know, the church is full of this kind of thing today. They were people who believed only in the first five books. The Torah.

Everything else was, as far as they were concerned, very doubtful. You didn't have to stick to it. You didn't have to follow it. And you didn't have to place any store by it. And so in amongst all that, they didn't believe in angels or demons.

They didn't believe in the resurrection. Because in their view, the Torah didn't cover any of that. And I think we're about to see Jesus teach them otherwise. But in their view, those things were not sound doctrine at all.

[16:18] And so they achieved quite a high status. They were very proud of their so-called holiness. They walked proud. And they walked with lots of demonstrations of just how holy they were.

Mostly very, very superficial. And in trying to impress everybody with their conduct, they also preached this word that there is not going to be a resurrection.

Now, this, of course, means that there is no afterlife. Because the resurrection that we read off in the rest of Scripture, what comes to mind immediately is Daniel 12, verses 2 and 3.

That Scripture tells us that we will all be raised, some to glory and some to condemnation. So it's completely counter to the teaching of the rest of Scripture.

But they believe this. And so, hark that for a moment. We'll return to it. They don't believe there's a resurrection.

[17:23] Neither do they believe in an awful lot of Scripture stuff. And by the way, if you're in a church or if you go to a church that says, oh, we only teach from the New Testament, we don't teach from the Old Testament, don't go there.

It's a very simple equation. If they're not teaching from the whole of the Word of God, don't go there. Even worse is the ones who say, we only teach from the words in red, only the words that Jesus actually spoke.

That's the Word of God. Everything else is up for grabs. No. God authored the whole thing using men to do it. So if you come across, because that's a similar spirit to this.

We only do the Torah here. Let's go find somewhere else then. Now, this particular trap comes from their interpretation of something called the lever at marriage.

So if you go to Deuteronomy 25. And we'll just read from verse 5 to 10, I think. It says,

[19:21] Now, we could spend an hour on that.

We're not going to. The point is that it was expected that if your brother died, leaving a wife with no children, we need to understand that this was a provision because a single woman with no males would likely starve to death.

She would she's very likely be completely destitute and she would starve to death. So this was a process to avoid that. But then why not let her marry outside the family?

Interesting question. I'm so glad you asked it. This contains a parallel for our salvation. You see, you were.

I was dead in my trespasses and sins. And therefore, my name was not in the book of life. Until Jesus paid the price.

[20:32] For my sins and restored my name in the family of God. So my name, which was not in the book of life, was added to the book of life because my brother kept my name alive.

Now, this lever at marriage was a symbolism of the same thing that if you died, your wife would be destitute and your name would die from Israel at that point.

Your name would die from the family of God. And by a brother marrying you and naming your firstborn after the dead guy.

The name was kept alive in Israel. So it's a picture of our salvation that's contained in this lever at marriage.

Now, these guys who have just said, so what if there were seven of them and then they all die and then she dies? What then happens when they all get to heaven? Crazy question.

[21:38] I'd go as far as to say this and you you probably won't hear this said very often. If you go online and get studies on this topic, there'll be all sorts of things said, all of which I think are right.

But they leave out something which I think is important here. And that that is that this is mockery. Right. They've got Jesus in front of them. And they're saying, so about this resurrection, then, you know, we don't think there is a resurrection.

But if there is, then what about this situation? And they present him with this scenario of seven brothers, all of whom die.

And this is not a good track record for whoever else finishes up marrying this woman, really, is it? But they create this scenario just to try and trap him into being unable to answer because the whole idea of a woman in heaven having seven husbands is just crazy.

When Genesis says marriage is between one woman and one man for life. So they painted him into this corner. So they think. They neglected to take notice of the fact that the book to which they refer was written by the Holy Spirit.

[22:55] So Jesus is not fazed by this at all. In fact, when you think about it, he really turns the tables on them.

Totally. They've set this trap. Their question could have been phrased like this just to just in case I haven't been clear. They could have said something like if the resurrection is true, then this woman would be the wife of seven men in the resurrection.

This does not square with the teachings of Genesis that the marriage is between one man and one woman. So they were pressing him to admit that there was no resurrection. Later on, when we come back to this next week in verse 34, it says when they saw that he.

Well, let's. Let's read it. Turn back to Matthew. If I misquote it. It won't do anybody any favors. So Matthew 22 again.

Verse 34. When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. So Jesus's answer silenced them. And so they question him about the resurrection, which they don't believe in.

[24:06] And his answer is instructive for all of us. He says, you're mistaken, not understanding the scriptures nor the power of God. So they considered themselves to be holy and righteous pillars of society.

And like many of our denominations today, they constructed doctrines based on a misunderstanding of the Bible. And then.

And, you know, churches do this everywhere. I'd almost go as far as to say all churches might do it to some extent in that they become convinced of a doctrine and will not be shaken from it.

And whether or not you walk well with the Lord does depend on whether you're prepared to constantly review what you think, you know, when you're presented with an alternative that questions what you know.

I've dealt a lot over the years with people who are convinced on a doctrine. I can't come to your church because. And they then misquote a doctrine or misquote me.

[25:16] And. I have to accept that I might be just as vulnerable to do that. Otherwise, I become just like them, proud and stuck up and my way is the only way and so on.

So we have to constantly review what we think we know, because we do not all know everything that God has to say to us. And we need to be aware, either when we're choosing a church or visiting a church or whatever.

To be aware that there are doctrines that they might hold. That they will not allow you to question. And. So groups get locked into certain beliefs.

And when you say, but hang on a minute, that doesn't tally with scripture. Yes, but it's what we believe. Often they don't even justify it because once you get a certain way down this road where you have to believe this thing, you stop justifying it and you just expect people to fall in line with it. And that's how we finish up walking into error. You're mistaken. Not understanding the scriptures, nor the power of God. To say that to the Sadducees is a bit like a smack in the face with a wet fish.

[26:31] You don't understand the scriptures. But we're the Sadducees. Hmm. We're pillars of society. Well. Sometimes people get.

Confused about this as though Jesus was saying, if you understood the scriptures, you would know that there's no marriage in heaven. That's not the point that's being made here.

In fact, this verse is the only verse. This occasion is the only occasion where I can find that it was said that there's no marriage in heaven.

But that's not the point he was making. The point he was making is, and he goes on to prove it. The idea that there is no resurrection. Is completely contrary to scripture.

What he's saying to them is. Two things. You don't get what the scripture says about resurrection and you don't understand the power of God to make it happen. Now, he's talking to people who don't believe there's even an afterlife.

[27:34] And actually, it's a very sobering moment if you don't believe in an afterlife. When the Lord says. There is. And you're going to be there.

Therefore, you're going to be judged. And therefore, you need to get your life sorted out. All that isn't written in this passage of scripture, but it's a natural follow on from it. Let's just deal first with why would Jesus reveal that there will be no marriage in heaven?

This is after the resurrection. The Bible is actually silent apart from this reference. Silent on the matter completely. But what we can infer from extrapolation of some other verses is that after the resurrection, there'll be no need for procreation.

Because there won't be anybody dying. Revelation 21 verse 4. There is no death there. No sickness, no crying, no tears and no death.

So heaven will be populated by all the saved individuals from all ages. And there won't be a need for procreation.

[28:43] But also marriage models for us the relationship between Christ and his church. And you find that in Ephesians 5. So there'll be no longer a reason to replenish the earth with offspring because there will be no death.

Additionally, Jesus statement that humans will be like angels of God in heaven. If you couple that with Paul's teaching about marriage in Ephesians 5 verses 22 to 33, this points to another, an additional conclusion.

That God instituted marriage on earth to demonstrate the greater heavenly spiritual reality. For believers on earth, marriage is a picture of the relationship between Jesus Christ, the Messiah, and his bride, the church.

When the actual heavenly marriage takes place between the bridegroom, Christ, and the bride of Christ, the church, the purpose for marriage is then fulfilled.

And having fulfilled the purpose for marriage, there's no longer a need for humans to marry because marriage is suspended by the ultimate reality to which it pointed.

[30:01] And I hope you kind of grasped all that and I wasn't too complicated. Marriage pointed to a reality bigger than just men and women getting married. It's also important just to latch onto the fact that it's not implied here that we will be like angels in every respect.

It's simply saying you'll be like angels when it comes to marriage. In other words, you won't be marrying. So they asked him a disingenuous question, trying to trap him.

And he simply said, you don't understand the scriptures and you don't understand the power of God. If you understood the power of God, you'd know it was no problem for him to raise you from the dead. In fact, we were on the Thursday night study, we were looking at Abraham and his sacrifice or his intended sacrifice of Isaac on Mount Moriah.

And in Hebrews, you read that he believed that God would raise him from the dead, not only from the dead, because Isaac was going to be a burnt offering.

So he was believing that God would raise him from the ashes. But he said to them, in the resurrection, you don't believe it, you're going to be like angels, which you don't believe in.

[31:21] And so he was revealing the depths of their ignorance. By the way, if you want to find out where this knowledge of the Sadducees comes from, it's in Acts 23, verse 8, where it says they don't believe in angels and the resurrection and so on.

And he then goes on to give them a very succinct lesson from the Old Testament by quoting Exodus 3, verse 6. We don't need to turn there because it's written in Matthew 22.

Verse 31. But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God? I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead, but the living.

So by using this reference, he says, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are still alive. Yeah, but hold on. They're dead and buried and have been for hundreds of years.

No, no, no. They're still alive. Because God has already said to you in the book of Moses, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I'm the God of living people who you buried years ago.

[32:31] Therefore, it gives us some confidence in life after death. So he's using Genesis to show them that they're wrong about the resurrection.

He's using. Effectively, he's using Genesis to show them that they are silly to only take account of five books of the scripture.

Although he's quoting from the bit they actually believe. Which is which is important. Now, there are lots of other scriptures they could. Had they been open to the rest of scripture.

They could have quoted Daniel 12, verse two, which we've already spoken of. Right. Speaks of the resurrection of everyone, whether we are good or evil. They could have gone to first king 17, verses 17 to 24, which is the raising to life of the widow's son.

Now, here is a resurrection that takes place. On earth. As a result of God using one of his prophets. They could have gone to two kings for verses 18 to 20.

[33:45] The raising of the Shunammite woman's son. They could have gone to the book of Job, chapter 19, verses 25 to 27. In which he says, As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives.

And at the last he will take his stand on the earth, even after my skin is destroyed. Yet from my flesh I shall see God whom I myself behold and whom my eyes will see and not another.

My heart faints within me. Job knew that he would not only see the Lord, but he would see the Lord whilst in his own flesh. Now, given that Job's flesh has been eaten by worms years ago, this means there has to be a resurrection, not only of his spirit, but of his body.

It's a bodily thing. And then you could, you know, if you get the notes, you'll see that I've quoted Psalm 16, verse 8, Psalm 49, verse 13 and other scriptures. So he showed them that their view about the resurrection was misinformed and also referred to the power of God, which they'd misunderstood.

He had the power to raise people from the dead. He also had the power to raise himself from the dead in the Gospels. He said, he said, I lay my life down and I will take it up again.

[35:09] So in both Testaments, we see him demonstrating his power over life and death. And in correcting their thinking and avoiding their trap, he also exposes the truth of the Gospel, that only he has the power over life and death.

And the resurrection of all of us, whether to everlasting life or condemnation, is in his hand. So I don't believe there's anybody in this room that's not saved.

However, people online are going to listen to this. And if you're listening to this online, you need to get right with the Lord Jesus Christ, because he is your only pathway of salvation. There aren't lots of ways to do it.

There is one way to do it. He requires only one thing from us that we believe or put our trust in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, thank you for this word.

I just bless you for all that you have given us by way of salvation. And thank you that you were so well prepared that you didn't fall prey to these ridiculous and entrapping questions.

[36:24] But you answered in a way that would feed us 2000 years later. You enabled us to enter into a new revelation.

And you've enabled us to walk with you. And to be saved for our lives, for our names to be kept alive in the kingdom, for our names to be kept alive in the book of life.

You enabled all that for which we give you immense thanks. Amen.