

**XI. THE PERSONAL RESPONSE OF THE KING AND HIS CONFRONTATIONS
WITH THE JEWISH LEADERS (Matt. 21:12-23:39)
by Pastor Richard Jones**

**A. AFTER JESUS PRESENTED HIMSELF AND WAS REJECTED HE CLEANSED THE
TEMPLE A SECOND TIME (Matt. 21:12-16).**

1. Matthew recorded what the Lord Jesus did in the temple (Matt. 21:12).

Jesus drove out those who bought and sold in the temple and overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold doves. The money-changers exchanged other currencies into the half-shekel which was needed to pay the temple tax. Those who sold doves were profiting by charging excessively for the birds and animals for sacrifices. These activities apparently took place in the outer court of the temple.

2. Matthew recorded what the Lord Jesus said (Matt. 21:13).

The Lord Jesus quoted from Isa. 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11 and condemned the practices of those involved in commercialism. Sadly speaking, churches today are involved in all kinds of money-making schemes. They have suppers, they hold yard sales, and all sorts of fund-raisers to make money.

3. Matthew recorded how the sick and needy came to Jesus in the temple's outer court and were healed (Matt. 21:14).
4. Matthew then recorded the response of the little children, the chief priests and the Lord Jesus (Matt. 21:15,16).

While Jesus was healing the sick even the little children began to praise Him, but when the religious leaders heard this they took up the issue with Jesus, no doubt, expecting Him to silence them. But Jesus responded by quoting Psalm 8:2. He was saying, in essence, if those who were religious leaders would not worship and praise Him as God's anointed, then He would receive the worship of little children. It should be noted that little children can often see spiritual truths, believe them, and speak words that glorify the Lord when many adults can't.

**B. AFTER JESUS WAS REJECTED HE LEFT THE CITY OF JERUSALEM AND RETURNED
THE NEXT MORNING (Matt. 21:17-22).**

1. Notice after Jesus cleansed the temple and healed the sick in the temple courtyard He retreated to Bethany where He spent the night (Matt. 21:17). Bethany lay two miles east of Jerusalem and it was where Martha, Mary and Lazarus lived. Quite possibly that was where he lodged that night.

2. Matthew records that Jesus returned to the city of Jerusalem the next day and he also recorded an incident which occurred along the way (Matt. 21:18-22). On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus placed a curse upon a certain fig tree because it bore leaves but no fruit. As a result, the tree withered away. This happened so quickly that it made the disciples marvel. Jesus then used this incident to teach His disciples to have faith and they would be able to do greater things. Notice that this no doubt has to be in line with other stipulations which the Lord gave concerning praying and receiving.

It should be noted that the fig tree which Jesus cursed represented the nation of Israel. Like the fig tree with leaves but no fruit, Israel had all the religious trimmings but they bore no real fruit for God. Note also the rapidity with which the tree withered pictured how quickly judgment would fall on the city and the nation. Some forty years later judgment came in 70 A.D.

C. AFTER JESUS ENTERED THE TEMPLE THE NEXT DAY HE WAS CONFRONTED BY THE PRIESTS AND ELDERS AS HE WAS TEACHING (Matt. 21:23-22:14).

1. Matthew records how they questioned Jesus' authority and how He answered them (Matt. 21:23-27). They wanted to know who gave Him the authority to do what He was doing. Jesus responded by saying He would tell them if they would answer just one question. Then He asked them about John's baptism. Was it from heaven or of men? This put them in a predicament so that they would not answer.
2. Matthew records the three parables which Jesus gave to rebuke the religious leaders (Matt. 21:28-22:14).
 - a. Jesus gave a parable of two sons to point out their lack of repentance (Matt. 21:28-32). One son said he would not go and work in his Father's vineyard, but he repented and went. The other son said he would go but he went not. Jesus then asked the Jewish leaders which of these sons did His Father's will? When they answered the first, Jesus pointed out that the tax collectors and harlots would go into the Kingdom before them because they believed John's preaching and repented but the Jewish leaders repented not. Note Matthew 3:5-10.
 - b. Jesus gave a parable of a householder to point out their wickedness (Matt. 21:33-46).
 - (1) Notice the religious leaders like the servants in the vineyard had not produced fruit for the householder who pictures God the Father. When He had sent His servants, the prophets, the workers in the vineyard had stoned and killed them. Finally, when the householder sent his son, they killed him. This pictures how the religious leaders would treat God's Son.
 - (2) Jesus then asked the religious leaders what would the householder do to those wicked men. They replied that he would destroy them and let the vineyard out to other farmers who would render fruits.

- (3) In response to their answer, Jesus then questioned them about a certain Scripture which spoke of a stone which the builders rejected (Matt. 21:42). The stone which the builders or religious leaders were rejecting was Jesus and as a consequence the Kingdom of God would be taken from them and given to the Gentiles through the church program. Jesus was a stumbling stone to the Jews but He became the foundation stone of the church. When He comes at His second coming He will be the Smiting Stone that falls upon the Gentile world powers (Dan. 2:34).
 - (4) After Jesus had spoken this parable the religious leaders perceived that He had spoken of them and they sought to lay hands on Him but they feared the multitudes because they regarded Jesus as a prophet (Matt. 21:45,46).
- c. Jesus gave a parable of a marriage feast to point out how the Jews and their religious leaders would be set aside and judged (Matt. 22:1-14).
- (1) In this parable the King is God, the Father, and His Son is the Lord Jesus. The invitation to the wedding feast was given in three stages. The first stage can be seen in John the Baptist and Jesus' disciples inviting Israel, but they refused to come (Matt. 22:1-3).
 - (2) The second stage can be seen in how the Jews treated the apostles of Christ who proclaimed the gospel first to them (Matt. 22:4-6).
 - (3) The response of the King, or God the Father, was to send His armies. This, no doubt, speaks of the instrument of God's judgment upon Jerusalem when Titus and his Roman soldiers destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (Matt. 22:7).
 - (4) The third stage of invitation, which goes out to others in the highways, pictures the Jews being set aside and the gospel message being given to the Gentiles (Matt. 22:8-10).
 - (5) The man whom the King saw without a wedding garment pictures the unsaved Jew who is not clothed in the righteousness of Christ by faith. As he was cast out so will the religious Jews be cast out (Matt. 22:11-13). Note Rom. 10:1-4; Matt. 7:21-23; 25:30.
 - (6) The many who are "called" refers to all those in the parable (Matt. 22:14). It covers those who rejected John and his message, those who refused Jesus' disciples and their message, those who refused the apostles and their message and it may be applied to those who reject the gospel message in our day. Those who are "chosen" are those who respond to the gospel message and receive Christ as Saviour.

QUESTIONS WHICH APPLY TO OUR LIVES

1. What was significant about the way in which Jesus presented Himself to Israel as their King?

2. How did the multitudes express worship of the Lord Jesus?

3. What can we learn from the incident of Jesus cleansing the temple?

4. What other stipulations concerning prayer should we follow along with Matt. 21:22?

5. What had the Jewish leaders failed to do as pictured in the parable of the two sons?

6. Jesus was a _____ stone to Israel, He is a _____ stone of the church, He will be the _____ upon the Gentiles.

7. Who does the guest without a wedding garment (Matt. 22:11,12) picture?

D. AFTER JESUS WAS CONFRONTED BY THE PRIESTS AND ELDERS HE WAS THEN CONFRONTED BY THE HERODIANS (Matt. 22:15 - 22).

1. Matthew records after Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees in the temple they left Him and took counsel how they might entrap Him. Afterwards, the Pharisees sent their disciples along with the Herodians. So these came with a question regarding taxes for the Roman government. Was it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar? (Matt. 22:15-17). Note the way the Herodians were trying to entrap the Lord Jesus. If He had said "no" they would have charged Him with rebellion against the Roman government. If He had said "yes" He would have lost favor with the Jews who were looking for the Messiah to deliver them from Roman oppression and establish the Kingdom with Israel over the nations.

2. Matthew records Jesus' response. Jesus called them hypocrites in trying to entrap Him. When He asked to see their tribute money (a denarius) He then asked them whose image and inscription was on it. When they answered Caesar's, Jesus told them to "render therefore unto

Caesar the things which are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." (Matt.22:15-21). Notice this account substantiates the fact that believers have a dual citizenship in this world. We are to obey human government and be subject to its ordinances (Rom. 13:1-5). We are to support financially human government by paying our taxes (Rom. 13:6,7). On the other hand, we as believers, are to obey God. And whenever there is a conflict between God and human government believers are to obey God rather than government (Acts 5:29).

3. We are told when Jesus had answered the Herodians in this way, they marveled, left Him, and went their way (Matt. 22:22). They had come thinking they could entrap Him, but they left with no way to counter His answer.

E. AFTER JESUS WAS CONFRONTED BY THE HERODIANS HE WAS THEN CONFRONTED BY THE SADDUCEES (Matt. 22:23 - 33).

1. Matthew records, after Jesus had put the Herodians to silence, the Sadducees came with a story and a question with which they sought to deny the resurrection and ensnare the Lord Jesus (Matt. 22:23 - 28). These religious rationalists, who denied the resurrection, cited the O.T. law concerning Levirate marriage (Dt. 25:5). Under such law, if a brother died, his brother was to marry his widow to preserve his family name and inheritance. The Sadducees had concocted a hypothetical case involving a woman whom seven brothers had married and then she had died. They followed this scenario with the question, "In the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven?"
2. Matthew records how Jesus responded to these religious rationalists (Matt. 22:29 - 33). Jesus pointed out to the Sadducees that they had erred being ignorant of the Scriptures and God's power. Notice even though some cultic groups, such as the Mormons, teach celestial marriages, the Bible nowhere mentions that our earthly husband-wife relationship will continue beyond this life. Jesus said, to the contrary, those in the resurrection would be like the angels. They are not a race and they do not procreate.

Notice secondly, Jesus questioned them about what God had said concerning Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is not the God of the dead but of the living. In order for God to keep His promises to these who had died they would have to be resurrected and have life. Since, therefore, God's promises have not been fulfilled their resurrection becomes an absolute necessity.

F. AFTER JESUS HAD ANSWERED THE SADDUCEES THE PHARISEES CAME AGAIN SEEKING TO ENTRAP HIM (Matt. 22:34 - 46).

1. On this occasion one of them, who was a lawyer or an authority in Jewish law, asked Jesus, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus answered that man's first obligation is to love God. Then He went on to say that the second greatest commandment is to "love thy neighbor as thyself." On these two commandments, Jesus said, hang all the law and the prophets. In other words, love to God and love to others fulfill all that the law and the prophets have said (Matt. 22:34-40).

2. At this same time, Jesus put a question to the Pharisees. He asked them whose son is Christ? The Pharisees answered that Christ was David's son. Jesus responded by saying that David had called Him Lord. The Lord (God the Father) had said to David's Lord (the Messiah and son of David) to sit on His right hand (Matt. 22:41-44). Jesus then asked the Pharisees, "If David called Him Lord how is He his son?" The Pharisees could not answer this question and that put an end to their questions (Matt. 22:45,46). We know the answer to this question - that the Messiah is both David's Lord and his son. Being God He is David's Lord and being man He is David's son. Matthew's genealogy shows that Jesus is the Messiah and legal heir to the throne of David. Luke's genealogy traces Jesus' blood line through David's son Nathan down to Mary. (Luke 3:23-38).

G. AFTER JESUS HAD ANSWERED THE PHARISEES AGAIN HE POINTED OUT THEIR INCONSISTENCES AND THE CONDEMNATION THEY WERE UNDER (Matt.23:1-36).

1. On this occasion Jesus spoke to the multitude and to His disciples about the things that characterized the Pharisees (Matt. 23:1-12).
 - a. Jesus told them to obey the words which the scribes and the Pharisees spoke from the law since they were sitting in Moses' seat as law givers. But Jesus told them not to follow their works or example (Matt. 23:2,3). They said and did not. In other words, they didn't practice what they preached.
 - b. Jesus said these law givers put burdens upon others, no doubt to keep laws, and wouldn't do the slightest thing to relieve their burdens (Matt. 23:4)
 - c. Jesus exposed the motive of the Pharisees and Scribes and why they did what they did - it was to be seen of men. They put on broad phylacteries and enlarged the borders of their garments (Matt. 23:5). They missed the meaning of the law to keep God's Word before their eyes by making phylacteries or cases with Scripture in them and wore them upon their foreheads. Instead of being reminded by the fringe on the high priest's garment of their holy walk they enlarged these borders for others to recognize their position and give them praise.
 - d. Jesus exposed the selfish and proud conduct of the Scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 23:6,7). They sought places of pre-eminence at the feasts and in the synagogues. They liked to be referred to as Rabbi or teacher.
 - e. Then Jesus exhorted the crowds and His disciples against following such conduct for praise and pre-eminence (Matt. 23:8-12). They were not to be called Rabbi or teacher for they had one teacher (Christ) and they were all brethren. They were not to call anyone "father" on the earth for they had one father (God the Father). They were not to be called masters (leaders) for Christ was their only leader. Jesus reminded them of the path they should follow for greatness and a principle that should govern their conduct.
2. On this occasion Jesus pronounced seven woes upon the Pharisees for their sinful practices. (Matt. 23:13-36). These woes were expressions of our Lord's sorrow for impending judgment upon them.

- a. Jesus pronounced a woe upon the Pharisees, firstly, for their own spiritual lack and their negative influence upon others (Matt. 23:13). They were hypocrites and had made no honest or sincere decision regarding repentance and therefore had no part in the Kingdom to come. Moreover, they were stumbling blocks to others and those who followed them were shut out of the Kingdom as well.
 - b. Jesus pronounced a second woe upon the Pharisees for the hypocritical and religious manner in which they took advantage of widows (Matt. 23:14). This probably refers to extortion in some way of their substance which they had inherited.
 - c. Jesus pronounced a third woe upon the Pharisees for their zealous efforts to make converts. They would travel far and wide to gain proselytes and when they turned to Judaism they were still lost and twice as worse than before. This is often the case when people are led to adopt some religious system but still have no relationship with God. Note what Paul said of the Jews in Romans 10:1-3.
 - d. Fourthly, Jesus pronounced a woe upon the Pharisees for their inconsistent customs in regard to swearing or making vows (Matt. 23:16-22). If a person swore by the temple he didn't have to pay but if he swore by the gold of the temple he then had to pay. Jesus pointed out to them to swear by the temple was to swear by everything in the temple and to swear by heaven was to swear by all that was in heaven. Note Matt. 5:33-37. According to what Jesus said a person's word alone should be sufficient.
 - e. Jesus pronounced a fifth woe upon the Pharisees for being so meticulous in some areas of obedience to the law but sadly lacking in other areas which were more important (Matt. 23:23,24). Such conduct, Jesus said, was like straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel.
 - f. Jesus pronounced a sixth woe upon the Pharisees for their outward display of cleanliness and righteousness while they were lacking spiritually on the inside (Matt. 23:25-28). Jesus compared their inward condition to the inside of a dirty cup and to whited sepulchers full of dead men's bones. On the inside they were full of extortion, excess hypocrisy and iniquity (Matt. 23:25,28).
 - g. Jesus pronounced a seventh woe upon the Pharisees for their hypocrisy concerning the prophets (Matt. 23:29-33). They garnished the tombs of the prophets and said they would not have been partakers with their fathers in slaying the prophets, but Jesus said they were witnesses against themselves because they were sons, or like their fathers, who killed the prophets. Jesus exhorted them to fill up the measure of their father (23:32). Their fathers had killed the prophets as illustrated in the parable of the householder (Matt. 21:33-39), they then would slay the son of the householder. For all their deeds Jesus referred to them as a generation of snakes for which there was no escape from judgment (23:33).
3. On this occasion Jesus followed His pronouncement of woes upon the Pharisees with a pronouncement of impending judgment upon the nation for all the innocent blood its leaders had shed (Matt. 23:34-36).

H. AFTER JESUS HAD SPOKEN OF JUDGMENT UPON THE NATION HE THEN LAMENTED OVER JERUSALEM AND THE CONDITION OF ITS PEOPLE (Matt. 23:37-39).

Jesus spoke of how He would have gathered Israel but they would not come to Him. Truly He had come unto His own (things) and His own (people) received Him not (John 1:11). Because of their rejection of Him, Jesus said their house would be left desolate and they would not see Him until they would receive Him as the Blessed One. The desolation came upon Jerusalem in 70 AD and Israel's reception of Jesus as their Messiah will come at the close of the Tribulation Period. Note Matt. 24:30; Zech. 12:10.

EXPOSITORY NOTES

- Matt. 22:16** The Herodians were not members of a religious sect but a political group loyal to Herod. They had no apparent affinity for the Pharisees but joined with them on this occasion because Jesus was no doubt a common enemy of both.
- Matt. 22:23** The Sadducees were members of a religious group who differed from the Pharisees in several areas. They were the rationalists of their day who denied the resurrection and life after death. Subsequently, there would be no future judgment or existence. They had, as it were, a religion one could live with, but not a religion one could die with.
- Matt. 22:18** Hypocrites were individuals who practiced a double life. The Greek word signifies the part or role that an actor would take which was artificial and not one's true character.
- Matt. 23:8** Rabbi was a title used in Jewish schools and consisted of three forms. "Rab" was the lowest degree of a teacher. "Rabbi" meant my master and carried a higher degree of respect. Rabboni carried the highest degree of respect and meant my great master; (Zodiotes, Word Dictionary, # 4461).
- Matt. 23:9** Believers are exhorted to call no one "Father" meaning a title of respect for a teacher or religious leader.
- Matt. 23:10** Believers are not to be called "Masters." The word here is *kathegetes* meaning "leader or guide." It is equivalent to rabbi used of Jewish teachers. Notice the title master (Jn. 11:28) is *didaskalos* and means "teacher." This is the same title the unbelieving religious leaders gave Jesus (Matt. 22:24). It was used of Him 40 times in the New Testament.

QUESTIONS WE MAY APPLY TO OUR LIVES

1. What responsibilities do we have as dual citizens of heaven and this world?

2. What Scriptural doctrine did the Sadducees deny ? _____
3. What are some Scriptures that refute their rationalistic view?

4. Who would be identified today as Sadducees? _____

5. What Scriptural arguments can you make against celestial marriage?

6. What cultic group propagates the erroneous teaching of celestial marriage?

7. What's wrong with calling a religious leader by the name Father?

8. What are some things that motivated the conduct of the Pharisees?

9. What kind of righteousness did the Pharisees possess? _____

10. What practical lesson can we learn from Jesus' answer regarding the first commandment (Matt. 22:37,38)?

