

Lesson Twenty-One—Matthew 22

Follow Me—With a Pure Heart

Introduction

God had chosen the Israelites as his children. At Mount Sinai they had promised to do everything God had commanded them. But they did not follow his commands (Matthew 21:28-32).

God had given Israel the privilege of serving him. Their leaders were to care for his vineyard. But they took the vineyard for their own (Matthew 21:33-44).

A family; a privileged place of employment—in this chapter Jesus expands on these pictures with a third; a wedding feast. The Jewish people refused this privilege and joy also.

These three *pictures* of Jewish rejection are followed by three *examples* of rejection. They demonstrate the hardness of the people's hearts.

22:1-14 The Jews refuse God's invitation to come to his wedding feast

Verses 1-10 Compare this parable with the two Jesus told in the previous chapter.

How are you a part of the fulfillment of verses 8-10? How can you help bring about the fulfillment of these verses?

Verses 11-14 What warning is there in these verses for the Gentiles who will be invited to the wedding feast? (See Romans 11:17,18,22.)

22:15-22 Jesus reveals how the Pharisees are confused about the nature of the kingdom

This is the first of three confrontations between the religious leaders and Jesus. The first people to confront him were the Pharisees, accompanied by the Herodians. The Herodians, as their name implies, were sympathetic to Herod's rule and would have been offended if Jesus had said they should not pay taxes to Caesar.

Verse 16 How do Jesus' opponents "set up" their question?

Verse 17 Analyze the question the Pharisees ask. Why does it betray a faulty understanding of God's kingdom?

Verses 18-21 How does Jesus reveal the Pharisees' confusion and at the same time lead us to understand the kingdom better?

Your neighbor thinks Christian denominations should try to force legislators to enact laws that will improve our country's morality. Another neighbor thinks it is wrong to send taxes to the federal government because these taxes are used for some immoral purposes. How would you counsel these people on the basis of these verses?

22:23-33 Jesus shows the shallowness of religious liberalism

Verses 23-28 How do the Sadducees mock Jesus with their question?

Verses 29-33 Jesus says that the Sadducees are in error on which two counts?

Use Jesus' method to rebuke the liberal church member today who rejects creation.

22:34-40 Jesus reveals the legalism of the expert in the law

Verses 34-36 Why do you think the expert in the law considered his questions to be such a great test of Jesus' understanding?

Verses 37-40 What was Jesus' answer? Why could the expert in the law never have come to this conclusion on his own?

Martin Franzmann says this about Jesus' answers to all three questions: "Jesus triumphs over His interrogators, not because He is cleverer or more adroit than they, but because He is purer than they."

Often Christians are afraid that they will not have the right answer for those who challenge their faith, and that they will need much study before they are capable of giving a good witness. Why is a pure heart in a better position to bear witness to and defend our faith than much learning?

22:41-46 Jesus shows the shallow nature of his opponents' understanding of the Messiah's role

When the Pharisees answered Jesus by saying that the Messiah was the son of David, they were again showing their desire to have the Messiah fulfill an earthly function—granting the Jews freedom from their enemies as David had done. Like father, like son.

Verse 45 The Messiah is David's son *and* David's Lord. What grander vision of the role of the Messiah does this give us?

Verse 46 Why did Jesus' questions and statements about David's understanding of the Messiah put an end to all opposition?

How does this chapter help us understand Jesus' ministry? How does it help us understand the nature of the kingdom in which we are serving?

Summary

Jesus exposed how wickedly the Jews had treated God's gracious invitation to his wedding banquet.

Jesus also silenced the broad range of religious opposition that his people were throwing at him. He rebuked the false understandings of the kingdom of God, the religious liberalism, and the legalism that were all prominent in his day.

For next time

Use The People's Bible commentary on Matthew to review this section. Read through Matthew chapter 23 several times