

Matthew 22:15–46

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[0 : 0 0] 15 to 46, this is what God's word says. Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words, and they sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians, saying, Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinions, for you are not swayed by appearances.

Tell us then what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or no? But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, Why put me to the test, you hypocrites?

Show me the coin for the tax. And they brought him a denarius, and Jesus said to them, Whose likeness and inscription is this? They said, Caesar's. Then he said to them, Therefore, render to Caesar's the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.

When they heard it, they marveled, and they left him and went away. The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question, saying, Teacher, Moses said if a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.

Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. So to the second, and the third, down to the seventh. After them all, the woman died.

[1 : 2 4] In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her. Jesus answered them, You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God.

For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven. And as for the resurrection of the dead, Have you not read what is said to you by God? I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. When the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching. When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.

Teacher, what is the greatest commandment in the law? And he said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. That is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets. Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, What do you think about the Christ?

[2 : 3 0] Whose son is he? They said to him, The son of David. He said to them, How is it then that David, in the spirit, calls him Lord, saying, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.

If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son? And no one was able to answer him a word. Nor from that day did anyone dare ask him any more questions.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, good morning. Let me also add my word of welcome to those of you who might be here, Christ Church Chicago for the first time.

We are certainly glad you are here. Interrogation is defined as a sometimes intense, but often formal and systematic questioning of someone or something.

A skilled interrogator knows how to ask questions of a suspect or a witness in such a way that if you're not telling the truth, or if you just don't know what you're talking about, you actually somehow trip yourself up and expose who you really are and what you're really up to.

[4 : 08] Please hear me when I tell you that there was no more skilled and interrogator ever encountered than my mother.

I remember growing up, some friends and I decided one day that we were going to skip school. Not realizing then that the school had already informed my mother of my absence, I came home at my normal time and like a lamb to the slaughter, I walked into the interrogation room of my mother's kitchen.

The questioning started with, so how was school today? I don't know why I didn't just confess right then because it only got worse from there.

Because the questions kept coming and the answers kept failing. Until ultimately, I was totally exposed. Won't tell you what happened next.

We see the same thing attempted here this morning in our text with Jesus. Now, I know this passage is a rather lengthy passage, so let me see if I can, like a good movie trailer, set up the plot and the conclusion to the story.

[5 : 40] Hopefully, this will help to more concisely package the passage for you. The plot is right here in the opening verse, verse 15.

Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. The verse even has the word plot in it.

Certainly, ever since Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, things between Jesus and the Jewish leaders have been heating up, as you've been hearing in previous chapters.

Here in our text, things have reached a whole other level as religious groups who don't even like each other come together and join forces to now square off against Jesus in one of the epic interrogations of all time.

These leaders wanted to trap Jesus, trick Jesus, discredit Jesus, and get him off the scene. Now, spoiler alert, let me go ahead and give you the conclusion.

[6 : 58] It's found in the last verse of this text, verse 46, and no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare ask him any more questions.

Insert mic drop here. When you go to the movies, there's little doubt that ultimately the hero of the story is probably going to prevail in the end.

But the intriguing part is how. How does Jesus navigate this malicious, trap-laden interrogation and still graciously somehow pour out truths and answers for us to grab hold to even today?

This, my friends, is about what happens when tough questions meet eternal answers. Tough questions meeting eternal answers.

This passage really breaks down into four scenes representing four questions posed in our text. Scene one is really about church and state.

[8 : 17] Scene two is about life after death or the resurrection. Question three is about the greatest commandment and scene four, coming from the Savior himself, is really perhaps the most important question of all that not enough people are asking.

Who is Jesus? Scene one, in our opening scene, we see the first groups of interrogators bring a question to Jesus.

verse 16. It says, there were disciples of the Pharisees or Pharisee interns, we'll call them, along with a group called the Herodians.

The Herodians were Jews who supported Herod the Great and were loyal to the Roman Empire. They were in favor of all things Rome.

Now, the Pharisees and the Herodians couldn't stand one another. And they would normally never be caught dead hanging out together in the same room.

[9 : 24] But, in a classic case of the enemy of my enemy is my friend, they came together to try to trap Jesus.

The interrogation begins with one of the oldest tricks in the book, Flattery. Verse 16. Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully and you do not care about anyone's opinion for you are not swayed by appearances.

Yes, this is a true statement, but they really didn't mean it. This was simply an effort to lower defenses. Then comes the question.

Tell us then what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Yeah, they felt like Jesus had no way out of this trap.

If Jesus says, yes, pay the tax, the Jews would denounce him as disloyal to Israel and a Roman sympathizer.

[10 : 30] If Jesus says not to pay the tax, the Herodians would report him to the Romans and he would be arrested probably for treason and insurrection. They thought they had Jesus between a rock and a hard place.

But Jesus, who is the rock, wasn't squirming in his hot seat. Verse 18 says, he already knew their intent, so just watch his cool, calm, and epic response.

Verses 19 through 22, he asks for a coin and then says, whose image and signature is on this coin? They, of course, replied Caesar. Then, in one of the most famous sayings in all the Gospels, Jesus says, well then, give to Caesar what's Caesar's and give to God the things that are God's.

Verse 22 says, the people marveled at what he said. You'll see that a few times represented in this passage. Not only had Jesus avoided their trap, he also dropped incredible knowledge and truth with his eternal answer.

What was Jesus saying? He's saying that those of us, particularly who are in him, really have dual citizenship. We are part of the civil government and we are part of the kingdom of God.

[11 : 55] In terms of the civil government, we are to render, or literally meaning to pay back to the government for services we enjoy, for cities and roads and sanitation and public safety and the rule of law.

This is the right thing to do. No, you can't just skip past April 15th. Second Peter chapter 2 says, we are to be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution.

This is the will of God and it will help you to put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Christians should be good earthly citizens who honor and pray for their leaders.

But then, most importantly, Jesus is also saying, Caesar is not your God. There's only one who can claim that title.

He's saying, let's be very clear. Every atom, every molecule, this coin with Caesar's face on it, Caesar himself, all of us in this room belong to God.

[13 : 09] God is saying, I'm not interested in your taxes. I'm interested in you. Give me your life. Follow me.

That's the cost. That's the payment for discipleship. That's the eternal answer to your question. Now, starting at verse 23, we see in our next group of interrogators, they called themselves the Sadducees.

Sadducees were a wealthy sect of Jewish leaders who did not believe in the resurrection, in angels, or life after death. They accepted only the literal law written in the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, and everything else was not actually scripture.

So, knowing that they didn't believe in the resurrection, they come to Jesus, verse 23, with a silly, hypothetical question about the resurrection.

Using what's called the Levirate Marriage Law of Moses from Deuteronomy chapter 25, which basically says, if a man dies and he has a brother, his brother was to marry the man's widow in order to provide an heir for the deceased and keep the property in the family name.

[14 : 25] I would encourage you to go back and listen to our series on Ruth and you will see and hear a lot more about Levirate Marriage Law.

So, they ask Jesus, well, what if this law plays out seven times with this widow marrying seven different brothers?

Whose wife would she be when they get to heaven? first, I think if I was brother three or four, I would start asking some questions about why are all my brothers dying around you?

But Jesus responds in verse 29 that you are wrong because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. These highly trained, educated men were wrong in their basic understanding of biblical truth.

If they knew the power of God, they would know that God is able to raise the dead. If they knew the scriptures, they would know that God will raise the dead.

[15 : 42] Jesus continues in verse 30 to explain to them that life in the resurrection is quite different from this life. The resurrection doesn't merely continue this world and its arrangements, but it is life of a completely different order.

So here it is. He tells them that there will be no levirate marriage or new marriage contracts in resurrection. So as such, your silly marriage question is really completely irrelevant because those rules won't even apply.

Church, don't get caught up in silly debates with people who like to debate about ancillary issues that really distract from the heart of the matter.

I know this because I was guilty of it myself. Growing up with a pastor, I would ask questions just to see how he would answer.

So dad, if God is all powerful, couldn't he create a rock so heavy that even he couldn't lift it? My dad would say, you need to go pray and ask God to give you the answer to that question.

[17 : 03] Jesus sees through the smokescreen and says, now really the heart of the matter for you is this false assumption you have about there being no resurrection.

Now that deserves a definitive eternal answer and I'm the one to give it. So I know you only read the first five books of the Bible containing the law, the Torah.

So let me address this matter from one of your favorite books. Exodus chapter 3. I'm sure you've read it. God spoke to Moses and said, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.

Now Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have been dead centuries before Moses. Why would God then say present tense I am the God instead of past tense I was the God unless they were resurrected and still alive with him because God is not the God of the dead.

He's the God of the living. God has the power to raise not only them but all of us to eternal life. if we believe in the power of God to raise the dead it changes everything.

[18 : 28] John 11 says I am the resurrection and the life whoever believes in me though he die yet shall he live and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.

This is the eternal answer to the tough question. To accept the resurrection is to accept that God is bigger than you ever imagined. God loves you God does not want you to perish but he wants to save you and restore you ultimately to be with him in paradise.

Knowing this gives us clear life direction. When we accept the resurrection we don't need to live for the empty temporal things of this world the things that we keep drinking from again and again that will never satisfy.

Why? Because we know like the old hymn writer used to say that some glad morning when this life is over I'll fly away to a home on God's celestial shore I'll fly away.

If the Sadducees could have accepted this they could have changed from being controlled by the power of death to being hopeful and joyful Bible teachers seeking God.

[19 : 50] They could have moved from being Sadducees to glad Ucees. Again verse 33 the people were left astonished by Jesus' eternal answer.

So now at our third scene this interrogation thing was not going so well. So the Pharisees regrouped and decided to send in the big guns for one more attempt.

How many of you know that any dispute whether it be with another individual or an organization it ratchets up to the ultimate level when one party or the other says I'm calling my attorney.

So powerful is the phrase that even in law enforcement just invoking it is supposed to stop all questioning and interrogation. The Pharisees called in their attorney.

Really they sent in one of their legal scholars one who was an expert in the law to come and test Jesus with another tough question.

[21 : 05] Teacher verse 36 which is the greatest commandment in the law. Now with there being over 600 laws in the Old Testament the religious leaders themselves hotly debated about what was the greatest commandment.

Surely this would be a question that would be impossible for Jesus to answer. verses 37 through 40 record Jesus two part answer.

The first part says you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. This was a direct reference to the Jewish Shema or confession of faith that devout Jews actually recited twice a day.

Then as if for extra credit Jesus says in verse 39 and a second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself on these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.

In essence true religion is about first loving God and loving people. Loving God is really about four things.

[22 : 28] It's your essential duty number one. The commandment is to love. Jesus didn't wade into the debate about heavy commands or light commands. He presented the command at the heart of all commandments.

The law of love. Secondly, it's knowing that he is the worthy object. The great commandment is not a call to love in general. It commands us to love a specific person.

You shall love the Lord your God. God who is the Lord of creation. God who has sovereign authority and rules over the heavens and the earth.

God, the one before he gave commands established his right to give commands. Just because of who he is, he's worthy of our love.

he's worthy of our love. Thirdly, it requires total devotion. The three nouns here, heart, soul, mind, stand together to speak of loving God with one's total being.

[23 : 33] The key word here is all. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. The command can actually be rendered this way.

Love God with everything you are in every possible way. Lastly, it is the ultimate authority. Verse 38 actually comments on verse 38.

This is the great and first commandment. Jesus called the command to love God great. It is the greatest, most weighty, ultimate command.

Jesus also calls this commandment first. It is not merely first in order, but it is first in priority and prominence. There is no more important duty than to love God with your whole being.

The next part of his answer, he also says, love your neighbor as yourself. How is the second command to love your neighbor like the first command to love God?

[24 : 38] They are not alike simply by incidental connection. They are organically and inextricably linked together. Here it is.

Love for God produces love for your neighbor. You can't love God and hate your neighbor.

First John four further says, if anyone says I love God and hates his brother, he is a liar. For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

So this begs the question, who is our neighbor? One's neighbor is not necessarily the person who looks like you. It's not the person who shares your background.

It's not the person you are most comfortable around. The fact that God loved you when you were a stranger obligates you to love strangers as neighbors.

[25 : 40] The person in need that you can help is also the neighbor you are commanded to love. Jesus goes on to say love your neighbor as yourself.

That phrase is not a command. It's really a presupposition. Jesus presupposes that we love ourselves. I'm not talking about self-worth or self-esteem or self-identity.

The point is very practical. You take care of you, don't you? You do what is best for you. You do what you have to to meet your needs.

This is the way you should love your neighbor. Do unto others, Matthew 7, as if you were the others. Love your neighbor as yourself.

Verse 40 says that all 600 plus of these laws hang on these two commandments. These two commandments are the hinges upon which the door of all religion swings.

[26 : 44] If you can't love God and love your neighbor, you can't keep any of the rest of these laws. Yes, it's all about loving God and loving people.

It is that simple. Yet, can I just add, it's that simple, yet it's impossible. I know, what are you talking about?

If we're honest, we've not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We fight with family, we mistrust friends, and we avoid neighbors.

If getting to heaven is as simple as loving God and loving people, I don't think I could trust the best five minutes of my life to get me into heaven.

Neither can you. The great commandment is impossible for sinful people like us to obey. True religion is all about loving God and loving people, but you can't be saved by religion alone.

[27 : 48] You need a savior. You need Jesus. You need the blood of his cross, which we will mark here in a moment, to atone for your failure to love God and love your neighbor.

Look, God doesn't love you because you are so lovable. You are so lovable because God loves you. Only the love of God the Father, the blood of God the Son, and the power of God the Holy Spirit can enable you to love the Lord your God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself.

We now finally come to the final scene, having now failed on three different attempts, and before they could think of another question to test him, Jesus decides to ask them a question.

Verse 41, what do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he? this is the most important question of all, and how we answer it will determine our eternal destiny.

They, of course, replied, the son of David, that's whose son he is, since they viewed the Messiah as only the son of David, they were unable to accept Jesus as their Messiah.

[29 : 14] why? They were looking for some outward characteristics of a descendant of King David, like power and prestige, wealth, or a strong army.

Jesus had none of these things on the surface. They were looking for a great warrior who would lead them in their rebellion against Rome, restoring the past glorious nation.

Jesus helps them to understand their error through David's example. Verses 42 through 45, he said to them, how is it then that David, speaking by the spirit, calls him Lord?

For he says, Jesus is now quoting Psalms 110, the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.

If then David calls him Lord, how can he be his son? How could Jesus be the son of David and David's Lord Lord at the same time?

[30 : 16] They simply had no answer for that question. Jesus so confounds them with this question that they give up at this point, though more drastic steps would be taken later here in Matthew.

Jesus silences the tongues of the opposition with God's clear truth from the Bible. The point here is this. David himself had a hope in a Lord greater than himself, a man to whom God would give all victory.

David knew he needed a Messiah, and we do too, because we really, for all the societal realities that we face, we really don't have a government problem, or a political problem, or a crime problem.

We have a sin problem, and a sin problem requires a Savior. God accomplished victory over our enemies of sin and death by sending his one and only son to this world to die on this cross and shed his blood for the forgiveness of sin.

God raised him from the dead and declared him with power to be his son. Yes, Jesus is absolutely David's son in the human lineage of David, but Jesus is so very much more.

[31 : 43] Jesus is the son of God. Jesus is the Messiah. Why is this question so important? The question is so important because what we think about the Messiah determines our past, present, and future.

Everything is in the context of the Messiah, for when we believe in Jesus, he gives meaning to our past history, he gives us purpose for how we are to live in the presence, and he determines our eternal destiny.

Jesus is Lord. All three groups of people in this passage and our text this morning revealed that though they had studied the Bible intensely, they did not know God, his power, his character, or his work.

so as it was then, so it is now for us today. They came to Jesus with a tough question about paying taxes and earthly things, but they got an eternal answer that God doesn't desire our things, he's the creator of all things.

What he desires most is us. They came to Jesus with a tough question about life after death, but they got an eternal answer that God is the source of all life and that Jesus is the way to eternal life.

[33 : 13] Death is not the end to those who are in him. They came to Jesus with a tough question about the greatest commandment, but they got an eternal answer that the only way to be the Christians we are called to be is that we have to love God with everything we are and love one another as ourselves.

Whatever the tough questions you have today, whatever the challenges you're facing today, know that Jesus not only has the answer, Jesus is the answer.

he's the eternal answer to all life's questions. Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you for being our answer. We thank you that regardless of the challenges that we may face in life today, that you've already answered every question.

ultimately, you were the eternal answer when you died on the cross for all of us. Remind us that you have everything under control and that every answer that we need, every challenge that we face, every struggle that we're trying to overcome, you yourself are already the answer for it all.

[34 : 49] Thank you, God. for being who you are in our lives. It's in your son's name we pray and give thanks. Amen. Amen.