

Matthew 22 Commentary-C H Spurgeon

PREVIOUS

NEXT

MATTHEW 22:1-14 PARABLE OF THE MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S SON

Matthew 22:1. AND Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said.

And Jesus answered, and spake unto them again. This was his reply to the hatred of the chief priests and Pharisees. He answered them by going on with his ministry. For them, and for the people also, he spoke again by parables. They came to him with quibbles; he replied by parables. In the previous chapter, we noticed that "they perceived that he spake of them."

This perception did not, however, lead them to repentance; but only increased their hatred against the Savior. Their partly concealed anger was all the greater because, through fear of the multitude, they could not yet lay hands on Jesus, and put him to death. They had willfully closed their eyes to the light, set it continued to shine upon them. If they would not receive it, perhaps some of the people, whom they had been misleading, might accept it; therefore once more the King would give them a parable concerning his kingdom, and concerning himself. This parable must be distinguished from the one recorded in Luke 14:16-24, which was spoken on another occasion, and with a different object. It would be worth while to compare the two parables, and to note their resemblances and their differences.

Matthew 22:2. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.

A certain king made a marriage for his son. Thus doth the King of glory celebrate the union of his Son with our humanity. The divine Son of God condescended to be united with our human nature, in order that he might redeem the beloved objects of his choice from the penalty due to their sins, and might enter into the nearest conceivable connection with them. The gospel is a glorious festival in honor of that wondrous marriage, by which God and man are made one. It was a grand event; and grandly did the King, propose to celebrate it by a wedding feast of grace. The marriage and the marriage festivities were all arranged by the King; he took such delight in his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, that everything that was for his honor and joy afforded infinite satisfaction to the great Father's heart. In addition to the Son's equal glory with the Father as Creator, Preserver, and Provider, by his marriage he was to be crowned with fresh honors as Savior, Redeemer, and Mediator.

Matthew 22:3. And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

The set time had arrived, and the Jews, who, as a nation, were bidden to the wedding, were invited to come and partake of the royal bounty. They had been "bidden" long before by the prophets whom the King had continued to send to them; and now that the festive day had dawned, the King sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding.

This was in accordance with the Oriental custom of sending a second invitation to those who had favorably received the first. John the Baptist and our Lord's apostles and disciples plainly told the people that the long looked-for event was drawing near; indeed, the appointed hour had already struck, the set time to favor Zion had come, all that was needed was that the guests should come to the wedding.

The Jews were highly honored in being chosen out of all the nations of the earth to attend the wedding of the King's Son; but alas! they did not prize their privileges: they would not come. They were instructed, entreated, and warned, but all to no purpose: "they would not come." Our Lord was very near the end of his sojourn on earth, and he summed up all that he had seen of Israel's conduct towards himself in this short sentence, "they would not come." It is not said, "They could not come," but, "They would not come."

Some for one reason, and some for another, and perhaps some without any reason at all; but, without exception, "they would not come." They thus manifested their disloyalty to the King, their disobedience to his command, their dislike to his Son, their distaste for the royal banquet, and their disregard for the messengers sent to them by the King.

Note, it was the King who made this wedding feast; therefore, to refuse to be present, when the invitation implied great honor to

those who received it, was as distinct an insult as could well be perpetrated against both the King and his Son. If an ordinary person had invited them, they might have pleased themselves about accepting the invitation; but a royal invitation is a command that will be disobeyed at the refuser's peril. Let this be remembered by those who are now refusing the invitation of the gospel.

Matthew 22:4. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.

The King was patient, and gave the disloyal people a further opportunity of coming to the wedding feast: Again, he sent forth other servants. He wished to make every allowance for those who had refused his invitation so that they might be left without excuse if they persisted in their refusal.

Possibly there may have been something in the servants that repelled instead of attracting them; or they may not have put the King's message a the best possible form; perhaps the intimation was not given clearly enough; or, perchance, on thinking over the matter, those who "would not come" might regret their hasty decision, and long for another invitation to the feast.

So the King sent forth other servants; and, lest there should be any mistake about the message they were to deliver, he said to them, "Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." Jesus here seemed to glance into the near future, and to foretell what would happen after his death. The apostles and the immediate disciples of our Lord went throughout the land, declaring the gospel in all its fullness, freeness, and readiness. At first they kept to the Jews, according to the King's word: "Tell them which are bidden." At Antioch, in Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas said to the Jews who contradicted and blasphemed, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you." (Acts 13:46.)

The apostles at first seem to have regarded their mission as restricted to the Jews; but they certainly did preach the gospel to them. They told them that, by the death of Jesus, the preparation of salvation for men was fully made, according to the King's words: "Behold, I have prepared my dinner." They preached a present salvation, and one which displayed the riches of divine grace: "My oxen and my fatlings are killed." Indeed, they proclaimed grace all-sufficient, meeting every want of the soul: "All things are ready." And then they uttered the King's proclamation: "Come unto the marriage." In his name they invited, urged, and even commanded the "bidden" ones to come. They began at Jerusalem, and called to the feast the favored seed of Abraham, whose honor it was to be the first invited to the royal banquet.

Matthew 22:5. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise.

The bulk of the Jewish race gave small heed to apostolic preaching: they made light of it, counted it of less importance than the worldly affairs in which their hearts were engrossed. In making light of the gospel, they really were making light of the great King himself, treading under foot the Son of God, and doing despite unto the Spirit of grace. The doctrine of the cross was a stumbling-block to them; the spiritual kingdom of the crucified Nazarene was despicable in their eyes: "they made light of it." And went their ways. They did not go in the way the King would have had them go; they despised his way, and went their own ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise. "His farm" and "his merchandise" are set up against the King's dinner: "my oxen and my fatlings." The rebel seemed to say, "Let the King do as he likes with his oxen and his fatlings; I am going to look after my farm, or to attend to my merchandise." Carnal men love carnal things, and "make light of" spiritual blessings. Alas, that the seed of Abraham, the friend of God, should thus have become as earth-bound as those whom the Jews contemptuously called "sinners of the Gentiles"!

Matthew 22:6. And the remnant took his servants, and entreated. them spitefully, and slew them.

The religious remnant among the Jews, who clung to external forms with a ferocious bigotry, rose against the first preachers of the gospel, and subjected them to cruel prosecutions. They cared nothing for the incarnation of Emmanuel, that mysterious marriage of Godhead and manhood; they cared nothing for the Lord God himself, but took his servants, and by scourging, stoning, slander, and imprisonment, entreated them spitefully. Their cruel conduct to the Lord's servants proved that they were full of spite, malice, and anger. Saul of Tarsus, before his conversion, was a type of the fanatical Pharisees and religious rulers who were, as he confessed to King Agrippa, "exceedingly mad" against Christ's followers.

In many cases, they not only spite fully entreated the King's servants, but they even slew them. Stephen was the first martyr of the truth after his Lord's crucifixion; but he was by no means the last. If "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church", the Holy Land was plentifully sown with it in the early days of Christianity. This was Israel's answer to the King, who bade the long-favored nation unite in doing honor to his well-beloved Son. The Jews said, in erect, "We defy the King; we will not have his Son to reign over us; and in proof of our rebellion against him we have slain his servants."

Matthew 22:7. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

In these terrible words, the siege of Jerusalem, the massacre of the people, and the destruction of their capital are all described. "When the king heard thereof, he was wroth. The King had reached the utmost limit of his forbearance and long-suffering patience. "The cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath" overflowed when he heard how his servants had been maltreated and slain; and: he sent forth his armies. The Roman emperor thought that he was sending his armies against the Jews; but he was, unconsciously, working out the eternal purposes of the most High God, even as the kings of Assyria and Babylon had been, in the olden time, the instruments by which the Lord had punished his rebellious people (see Isaiah 10:5, Jeremiah 25:9).

The cruel executioners did their terrible work in the most thorough manner. Read Josephus, and see how the Romans destroyed: those murderers, and burned up their city. The words are remarkable in their awful force and accuracy. Only Omniscience could foresee and foretell so fully and faithfully the woes that were to befall the murderers and their city.

The divine retribution that fell upon Jerusalem ought to convey a solemn warning to us, in these days when so many are making light of the gospel in our highly - favored land. No nation ever yet refused the gospel without having some overwhelming judgment as the consequence of its daring criminality. France is to this day suffering the effects of the massacres of St. Bartholomew. If England should reject the truth of God, its light, as a nation, will be quenched in seas of blood. May God prevent such an awful calamity by His almighty grace!

Matthew 22:8, 9. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

Then: when the King was angry, even then he was gracious. In wrath he remembered mercy. Judgment is his strange work; but "he delighteth in mercy. " Then saith he to his servants: the King still had servants left, though his enemies were destroyed. Christian preachers remained when chief priests and Pharisees were extinct, and Jerusalem was in ruins. The royal Host gathered his servants together, and put before them the exact position of affairs: "The wedding is ready. " Gospel provision was made in abundance; there was no lack on the King's part. His Son's wedding must be celebrated by a feast; and a feast requires guests: "but they which were bidden were not worthy. " This is the last we hear of those who were bidden. Seeing that they judged themselves unworthy of eternal life, others must be called. Salvation is not a matter of worthiness, or none would be saved. These men were too proud, too self-sufficient, too high-minded to be worthy recipients of the King's favor. They preferred their farms and their merchandise to doing honor to the King and his Son, for at heart they were traitors.

What was to be done? Should the wedding be canceled, and the provision for the feast be destroyed? Not so. The King said to his servants: "Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. " Glorious was the outburst of grace which bade the apostles turn to the Gentiles. Hitherto they had not been bidden; but when the Jews finally rejected the Messiah, he gave to his disciples their wider commission: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." In the parable, highwaymen, hedge-birds, travelers, tramps, and all sorts of people are mentioned; and thus is Jesus to be preached to men in every condition, but especially to those who are "out of the way." It is not after the manner of men to invite to a wedding banquet those who stray in the highways; but Jesus was setting forth the glorious freeness of the gospel invitation: "as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. " This indicates no limited call, no preaching to gracious character. Restrictions there rightly were at the first; but alter the death of Christ they were all removed. Even our Lord said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" and when he first sent forth his twelve apostles, his command to them was, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not." But the time had come for the universal proclamation of the gospel. After his resurrection, Jesus said to his disciples, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations."

Matthew 22:10. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

So those went out into the highways: they did as they were told. This was the disciples' warrant for doing what must at first have seemed very strange to them. They themselves belonged to the favored race which had been first bidden; but God's grace overcame their prejudices, and they "went out" among the heathen, proclaiming the marriage of the Son of God, and pressing men to come to the wedding feast. The servants went in different directions into the highways; — the word is in the plural, "the partings of the highways", the Revised Version renders it; — the crossroads where most people might be expected to be gathered together.

Wherever the people are, there should the preachers of the gospel go with their God-given message.

The King's servants were so earnest and diligent, and their Master's grace wrought so effectually through them, that their efforts were eminently successful. They gathered together all as many as they found. The message that had been despised by the Jews was welcomed by the Gentiles; and from the great heathen highways of the world, — Rome, Athens, Ephesus, etc., — many were gathered to the gospel feast. All ranks, classes, and conditions of men came to the banquet of love. These people were manifestly willing to come, for the King's servants "gathered together all as man: as they found." Characters outwardly very different united in obeying the summons: both bad and, good, were collected at the table.

The best gathering into the visible church will be sure to be a mixture in the present imperfect state of humanity; there will be some admitted who ought not to be there. Tares will grow among the wheat; corn and chaff will lie on the same floor; dross will be mingled with precious gold; goats will get in among the sheep; the gospel net will enclose fish of every kind, "both bad and good." And the wedding was furnished with guests: happy, willing, wondering, enthusiastic guests found themselves lifted from the highways into royal company; the beggar was taken from the dunghill to sit with princes in the presence of the King. Hallelujah! Thus the King was happy, the Prince was honored, the festal hall was filled; and all went merry as a marriage bell.

What shouts of joy would go up from these outcasts as they sat at the royal table! Everything was ready for the feast before, nothing was wanting but guests to partake of the King's bounty; now that they had come, surely all would go well. We shall see.

Matthew 22:11. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment.

The success of the servants in filling the banqueting-hall was not altogether so great as it appeared to be at first sight; at least, it was not so perfect as to be without admixture. The guests continued to pour into the palace, putting on the robes provided by the King, and sitting down with honest delight to enjoy the good things prepared for them; but there was one among them who hated the King, and his Son, and who resolved to come into the festive assembly without wearing the robe of gladness, and thus to show, even in the royal presence, his contempt for the whole proceedings.

He came because he was invited, but he came only in appearance. The banquet was intended to honor the King's Son, but this man meant nothing of the kind; he was willing to eat the good things set before him, but in his heart there was no love either for the King, or his well-beloved Son.

His presence was tolerated till a certain solemn moment: when the King came in to see the guests. Then the eye, which looks over all things, but overlooks nothing, spied out the daring intruder: he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment. The wedding garment represents anything that is indispensable to a Christian, but which the unrenewed heart is not willing to accept. The man who had not on the wedding garment was out of sympathy with the assembly, out of harmony with its object, devoid of loyalty to the King, yet he braved and brazened it out, and thrust himself in among the wedding guests. It was a piece of defiant insolence, which could not be allowed to pass unnoticed and unpunished. In some respects he was worse than those who refused the invitation; for while he professed to accept it, he only came that he might insult the King to his face. He would not put on the garment which was freely provided, because by doing so he would have been honoring the Prince, whose marriage was to him an object of contempt and scorn.

It is well to remember that there are foes of the heavenly King, not only outside the professing church of Christ, but also within its borders. Some altogether refuse to come to his Son's weddings, but others help to fill the banqueting-hall, yet all the while they are enemies to the great Founder of the feast. This man without the wedding garment is the type of those who, in these days, pretend to be Christians, but do not honor the Lord Jesus, nor his atoning sacrifice, nor his holy Word. They are not in accord with the design of the gospel feast, namely, the glory, of the Lord Jesus in his saints. They come into the church for gain, for honor, for

fashion, or for the purpose of undermining the loyal faith of others. 'The godly can often see them: this man must have been conspicuous amongst the wedding guests. The traitors within the church, however, have most to fear from the coming of the King; he will detect them in a moment, even as the royal Host in the parable, as soon as he came in to see the guests, saw there the man who had not on the wedding garment.

Matthew 22:12. And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

The King addressed him kindly enough: He saith unto him, "Friend." Perhaps, after all, he did not intend to insult the King; therefore he called him "friend." He pretended to be a friend, therefore the King addressed him as such. Still, it was a grave outrage that he had committed, and he must account for it: "How camest thou hither not having a wedding garment?" "Was it by accident or design? Did not the keeper of the wardrobe tell thee about the garments provided for all my guests? Didst thou not feel like a speckled bird as thou didst see all thy companions in wedding array, while thine own garb ill became this festal hall? If thou art an enemy, how camest thou in hither? Was there no other place in which to defy me than in my own palace? Was there no other time for this insult than my Son's wedding day? What hast thou to say as an explanation or excuse for thy strange conduct?" Notice, how personal the question is. The King addresses him as though he had been the only one present. And he was speechless. He had a fair opportunity of excusing himself if he could; but he was awed by the King's majesty, and convicted by his own conscience. No evidence needed to be given against him; he stood before the whole company, self-condemned, guilty of open and undeniable disloyalty. The original says, "he was muzzled." He may have talked glibly enough before the King came in; he had not a word to say afterwards.

Eloquent silence that! Why did he not even then fall on his knees, and seek forgiveness for his daring crime? Alas! pride made him incapable of repentance; he would not yield even at the last moment.

There is no defense for a man who is in the Church of Christ, but whose heart is not right towards God. The King still comes in to see the guests who have accepted his royal invitation to his Son's wedding. Woe be to any whom he finds without the wedding, garment!

Matthew 22:13. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

He had, by his action, if not in words, said, "I am a free man, and will do as I like." So the king said to the servants "Bind him." Pinion him; let him never be free again. He had made too free with holy things; he had actively insulted the King, he had lifted up his hand in rebellion, and dared to set his foot within the King's palace: "Bind him hands and foot." Prepare the criminal for execution; let there be no possibility of the rebel's escape. He is where he ought not to be: "Take him away." The King's palace is no place for traitors. Sometimes this sentence of excommunication is executed by the church, when deceivers are put out of the ranks of the Lord's people by just discipline; but it is more fully carried out in the hour of death. It is worthy of note that the word for "servants" in this verse is not the same as that used in Matthew 22:3, 4, 6, 8, 10. There it is *douloi*, here it is *diakonoi*, "ministers", meaning the angels, whose business it is especially to gather out of Christ's kingdom "all things that offend, and them which do iniquity" (Mt 13:41), "and sever the wicked from among the just" (Mt 13:49).

The man in the parable had refused the robe of light, so the king says to his servants, "Cast him into outer darkness." Cast him away, as men throw weeds over the garden wall, or shake off vipers into the fire. Cast him far away from the banquet-hall where torches flame and lamps are bright, "into outer darkness." It will be all the darker to him now that he has seen the light within. His daring insolence deserves the most signal punishment: he is appointed to a place where "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." It will be no place of repentance, for the tears shed there will not be those of godly sorrow for sin; but hot scalding streams from eyes that flash with the fire of rebellion and envy burning in unsubdued hearts. The "gnashing of teeth" shows the character of the "weeping." The outcast from God would gnash his teeth in all the fury of disappointed hatred, which had been foiled in its attempt to bring dishonor upon the King in connection with his Son's wedding. Those who are professedly Christian, and yet really unbelieving and disobedient, will have such a doom as is here described. May the Lord in mercy save all of us from such a fearful fate!

Matthew 22:14. For many are called, but few are chosen Many are called: the limit lies not there. We preach no

restricted gospel.

All who hear that gospel are called, but it does not come with power to every heart: but few are chosen. The result goes to show that, one way and another, the mass miss the wedding feast, and a few choice spirits find it by the choice of God's grace.

These words, of course, relate to the whole parable. Those who were "called" included the rejectors of the King's invitation; who, by their refusal, proved that they were not "chosen." Even amongst those who accepted the invitation there was one who was not "chosen", for he insulted the King in his own palace, and showed his enmity by his disobedience to the royal requirements. There were, however, "chosen" ones; and sufficient to fill the festal hall of the great King, and to render due honor to the wedding of his Son. Blessed are all they that shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb! May the writer and all his readers be amongst that chosen company, and for ever adore the distinguishing grace of God which has so highly favored them!

MATTHEW 22:15-22 THE KING'S ENEMIES TRY TO ENSNARE HIM

Matthew 22:15. Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk..

Then went the Pharisees: they must have perceived that the parable of the wedding, feast, like that of the wicked husbandmen, was spoken against them. Our Lord's words, however, did not move them to repentance; but only increased their malice and hatred against him. Their hearts were hardened, and their consciences soared; so they took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. They would not acknowledge that Christ was the wisdom of God and the power of God; had they done so, they would not have attempted their impossible task. They, saw that, to ensnare Jesus in his talk, was a difficult undertaking; and therefore they "took counsel" how they might accomplish it. If he had been as faulty as we are, they might have succeeded; for men who wish to entrap us in our talk need not consult much about how to do it.

This incident teaches us that men who can be as precise and formal as these Pharisees were, can yet deliberately set themselves to entangle an opponent. Great outward religiousness may consist with the meanest spirit.

Matthew 22:16. And they sent out him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither caress thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men,

They sent out unto him their disciples: they were probably ashamed to appear again in the presence of Christ, after his exposure of their conduct towards himself as the King's Son; so they despatched a select detachment of their disciples, in the hope that the scholars might succeed where their teachers had failed. With the Herodians : the disciples of the Pharisees were to be reinforced by a company from an opposite section of the enemies of Christ. The united band could operate against Jesus from different sides.

The Pharisees hated the rule of a foreign power, while the Herodians advocated the supremacy of Caesar. Differing as these two sections did, even to mutual hate, they for the time laid aside their own disputes, that they might in one way or another ensnare our Lord.

They began with fair speeches. They addressed Jesus by a title of respect, "Master": they only used the word in hypocrisy; but they professed to regard him as a teacher of the Law, and an authority on disputed points of doctrine or practice. They also admitted his sincerity and truthfulness: "We know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth." They further praised him for his fearlessness: "neither caress thou for any man." They then lauded him for his impartiality: "for thou regardest not the person of men." "Thou wilt speak without any regard for what Caesar, or Pilate, or Herod, or any of us may think, or say, or do." Thus did they try to throw him off his guard by what they uttered in sheer flattery. All that they said was true; but they did not mean it. From their lips it was mere cajolery. Let us take note that, when evil men are very loud in their praises of us, they usually have some wicked design against us. They fawn and flatter that they may deceive and destroy.

Matthew 22:17. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?

"Tell us therefore ": "because thou art true, because thou teaches" the way of God in truth, because thou caress not for any man's

opinion when thou art thy self in the right, and because thou regardest not the person of men, but darest to speak the truth, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear; tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? ” “We are very anxious to have thy opinion upon this important point; on which some teach one thing, some another. It is a matter of great public interest everybody is talking about it; it must have been considered in all its bearings by such a learned teacher as thou art, and we should like to know thy thoughts upon it: What thinkest thou a “Dear innocents! Much they wanted instruction from him! All the while that they were speaking, they were inwardly gloating over the triumph which they felt sure would be theirs, when by any answer that he might give, or even by his silence, he must provoke the animosity of one portion of the people, or the other.

Here is the question they put to our Lord: “Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? ” They referred to the annual capitation tax, imposed by the Romans, which was the cause of great indignation among the Jews, and led to frequent insurrections. Judas of Galilee (Acts 5:37), one of the many pretended Messiahs, had taught that it was not lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, and he had perished in consequence of his rebellion against Rome. Christ’s questioners may have hoped that some such fate should befall him.

Their question was a delicate and difficult one in many ways. Any answer whatever would bristle with points by which his enemies hoped to entrap him. If he said, “It is lawful,” then they would denounce him as in league with the oppressor of his people, and a traitor to the Theocracy of which they boasted, even though they had virtually cast off the divine rule over them. If he said, “It is not lawful,” they could accuse him to the Roman governor as exciting the multitude to rebellion. This was, in fact, one of the false accusations brought against Jesus when he was before Pilate: “We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding, to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a king.” If he remained silent, they would twit him with being a coward who did not dare to say what he thought, lest he should offend his hearers. Very cleverly was the net spread; but those who had so cunningly made and laid it little thought that they were only setting a snare in which they themselves would be caught.

Thus doth it often happen, as David said, “The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.”

Matthew 22:18. But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?

Our great thought-rending King was not to be deceived either by their flattery or their crafty questioning: But Jesus perceived their wickedness; for it was that, with a vengeance. Malice and deceit designed his overthrow; but he saw through the cunning of his enemies, and perceived the wickedness that prompted them thus to assail him. Onlookers may not have perceived their wickedness, and our Lord’s disciples may have been puzzled as to how he would reply; but, as in all other trying circumstances, Jesus himself knew what he would do.

Probably even his enemies did not expect such a question as he now put to them: “Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? ” They hoped that they had disguised their real purpose so cleverly, that they must have been surprised to have the mask so quickly torn from their faces, and to be exposed to public gaze in their true character as “hypocrites.” Jesus compared them to stage-players, dissemblers, men acting a false part with intent to deceive.

Rightly did he name them ; and wisely did he say to them, “Why tempt ye me? “It is as if he had said, “You see that I am not deceived by your false and flattering speeches, I can read the malice that is written in a our hearts, you are just powerless before me if I choose to treat you as I can do; what can poor, puny creatures, such as ye are, do against me? Why tempt ye me? “There is infinite scorn in our Savior’s question; yet there is an undertone of pity even for those who deserved it not: “Why tempt ye me? Have I given you any cause why you should seek to entrap me? Why are, you so foolish as to ask questions which must be to your own hurt?”

Whenever men pretend great reverence for Jesus, and then seek, by their erroneous teaching, or their science falsely so-called, to overthrow his gospel, they are base hypocrites.

Matthew 22:19. Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny.

Having exposed their folly and hypocrisy, Jesus proceeds to put them publicly to shame. He said to them, “Shew me the tribute money. ” This request on his part, and their compliance with it, would make the whole matter more vivid and impressive to the bystanders. When there is something to see and handle, a lesson becomes the more striking. Our Lord asked them to show him a specimen of the coin usually paid for the capitation tax: and they brought unto him a penny, a denarius. This coin represented the daily pay of a Roman soldier, and in the parable of the vineyard it was said to be the daily wage of the laborer. Had these men

guessed the use to which Jesus would put the denarius, they would not have so quickly procured one for him. They bought their own confusion with that coin. They would never afterwards be able to look upon the tribute money without remembering how they were foiled in their attempt to entangle the hated Nazarene.

Matthew 22:20, 21. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?

They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

He asked another question, that they might themselves assist in replying to themselves: He saith unto them, "Whose is this image and superscription? Or rather, inscription. Before them were the image and inscription of the Roman emperor on the piece of money; but he would make them say as much, so he asks, "Whose is this?" The Jewish Rabbis taught that "if a king's coin is current in a country, the men of the country do thereby evidence that they acknowledge him for their lord."

When we are dealing with ungodly men, it is well if we can make them to be their own accusers. They say unto him, "Caesar's", No other answer was possible. This tribute money was not a shekel of Jewish coinage, but money of the Roman empire. This was a plain proof that, whether they liked it or not, they were Roman subjects, and Caesar was their ruler. What then must follow but that they should pay to their acknowledged ruler his due? Then saith he unto them, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's." Whatever belongs to Caesar is to be rendered, to him. Jesus did not say what was Caesar's, the coin itself settled the question of paying tribute; his reply covered all the duties of loyal subjects to the ruler under whose jurisdiction they lived; but this did not touch the sovereignty of God.

Jehovah held rule over consciences and hearts; and they must see to it that, as Caesar had his own, the Lord had his own also. Render therefore "unto God the things that are God's." This was not an evasive reply on Christ's part; it was full of meaning, and very much to the point; and yet it was so put that neither Pharisees nor Herodians could make anything out of it for party purposes, or for their wretched design of entangling Jesus in his talk.

Neither of the two sects turned a penny by their penny.

To us the lesson of this incident is, that the State has its sphere, and we must discharge our duties to it; but we must not forget that God has his throne, and we must not allow the earth-kingdom to make us traitors to the heaven-kingdom. Caesar must keep, his place and by no means go beyond it; but God must have the spiritual dominion to himself alone.

Matthew 22:22. When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left him, and went their way.

They had some sense left even if they had no feeling. They saw that their plot had ignominiously failed; they marveled at the wisdom with which Christ had baffled their cunning; they knew that it was hopeless to continue the conflict: so they left him, and went their way. Their way was not his way. They had already admitted, in their flattering speech, that he was a true teacher of God's way; and now they completed their own condemnation by leaving him, and going their own way.

Lord, save us from following their evil example! Rather, may we cleave to Christ, and go his way!

MATTHEW 22:23-33 THE KING AND THE SADDUCEES

Matthew 22:23. The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him,

The same day: there was no rest for Jesus; as soon as one set of enemies was driven away, another company marched up to attack him. He had silenced the Pharisees and the Herodians; now there came to him the Sadducees, the broad churchmen, the rationalists of our Savior's day: which say that there is no resurrection. They rejected a great deal more of the teaching of the Scriptures than this one point of the resurrection; but this is specially mentioned here as it was the subject on which they hoped to entrap or confuse the Savior. The Sadducees "say that there is no resurrection"; yet they came to Christ to ask what would happen, in a certain contingency, "in the resurrection." They evidently thought that they could state a case which would bring into contempt

the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. They might have taken warning from the experience of the Pharisees and the Herodians; but doubtless they felt so sure of their own position that they expected to succeed though the others had so conspicuously failed.

Matthew 22:24. Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother “

Master;” they came with affected respect for the great “Teacher.” They were as polite as the previous company of assailants; but, like them, though the words of their mouth were smoother than butter, war was in their heart: though their words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords (Psalm 55:21). “Moses said ”: they gave the substance, though not the exact words recorded in Deuteronomy 25:5. The law of Moses, in this as in many other shatters, recognized existing customs, and imposed certain regulations upon them. For a man to die without leaving a child to bear his name, and enter upon his inheritance, was regarded as so great a calamity that the Jews judged that every possible means must be taken to prevent it.

The practice here described prevails among various Oriental nations even to this day.

Matthew 22:25-28. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven if or they all had her.

These Sadducees may have known such a case as they stated, though it is extremely unlikely; more probably, this was one of the stock stories they were in the habit of telling in order to cast ridicule upon the resurrection.

They had no belief in spiritual beings; therefore, they supposed that, if there were a future state, it would be similar to the present. Having stated their case, they put to the Savior this perplexing question: “In the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. ” They doubtless thought that this question would puzzle Christ, as it had puzzled others to whom it had been put; but he had no more difficulty in answering this than he had with the previous esquires.

Matthew 22:29. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

Jesus answered and said unto them, “Ye do err: ” the error was not with him, but with them. Their supposed argument was based on their own erroneous notions about the unseen world; and when the light of God’s Word was poured upon their seven men of straw, they vanished into thin air. The answer to objectors, skeptics, infidels today, may be given in our Lord’s words: “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. ” These Sadducees thought that they had found a difficulty in the Scriptures; but their error arose from their “not knowing the Scriptures.”

This is the root of almost all error, ignorance of the Inspired Word of God.

These men were acquainted with the letter, but they did not really know the Scriptures, or they would have found there abundant revelations concerning the resurrection.

Their error arose, also, from ignorance of “the power of God.” The resurrection of the dead is one of the greatest proofs of the power of God, with whom all things are possible. These Sadducees limited the Holy One of Israel in their ignorance or denial of his power. What is there about the resurrection that is incredible to the man who knows “the power of God”?

Surely, he, who created all things by the word of his power, can, by that same power, raise the dead in his own appointed time.

Matthew 22:30. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.

“In the resurrection ” our Lord implied that there is a resurrection; he did not even stay to prove that truth, but went on to speak of the resurrection life as being of a higher order than our present natural life: “they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as

the angels of God in hearer. ” Our Savior’s answer struck at another Sadducean error; his questioners did not believe in angels. Jesus did not attempt to prove the existence of angels; but took that fact also for granted, by saying that, “in the resurrection “men” are as the angels of God in heaven.” He did not say that they are changed into angels; but, as Luke records his words, “they are equal unto the angels.” They are spiritual beings, as Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 15.31,

Matthew 22:32. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

Our Savior now gives these Sadducees further instruction “as touching the resurrection of the dead. ” He used the formula he so often employed in speaking to those who professed to read the Scriptures: “Have ye not read? ” You reject the oral traditions which the Pharisees accept and teach in place of the commandments of God, have you not read that which was spoken unto you by God? ” Jesus always manifested the utmost reverence for the revealed Word of God. He here showed that the truth made known in the Scriptures is a very personal matter This message was spoken unto these Sadducees, although they knew it not; it was spoken by God, yet they received it not.

How necessary it is that we should search the scriptures, lest there should be divinely-revealed truths that so have not even read! How needful, also, is the teaching of the Holy Spirit, lest we should read, as these Sadducees did, and yet not know the Scriptures!

Jesus might have referred to many passages in the Old Testament about the resurrection; but as the Sadducees regarded the Pentateuch with special honor, he quoted what Moses had recorded in Exodus 3:6: “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; ” and then added his own comment and exposition: “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. ” Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had long been dead when the Lord spoke to Moses out of the burning bush. His words implied that the patriarchs were still living. His covenant was made with those who still existed.

There is much teaching in this truth, that “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” Some suppose that, until the resurrection, the saints are virtually non-existent; but this cannot be. Though disembodied, they still live; Jesus does not argue about it, but he states the fact as beyond all question. The living God is the God of living men; and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still alive, and identified as the same persons who lived on the earth. God is the God of Abraham’s body as well as of his soul, for the covenant seal was set upon his flesh. The grave cannot hold any portion of the covenanted ones; God is the God of our entire being, spirit, soul, and body.

Matthew 22:33. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.

Our Lord’s reply to the Sadducees was so complete that they were “put to silence” (v. 34). They did not attempt any further assault upon him, for they must have been convinced of their own impotence. Those who had stood by as listeners, the multitude, that had gathered as crowds delight to do when there is a public discussion, were astonished at his doctrine. They were “astonished” both at the matter and the manner of Christ’s teaching.

This is an expression that we often find in the life of our Lord; but apparently those who were “astonished” did not accept his teaching. They talked to one another about the marvelous way in which he answered all questions; but they did not admit that such a Teacher could be none other than the long looked-for Messiah. Even the scribes, who complimented Christ upon his answer (Luke 20:39), saying, “Master, thou hast well said,” did not follow up that confession by becoming his disciples.

MATTHEW 22:34-40 THE KING TESTED BY A LAWYER

Matthew 22:34. But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.

The multitude that had listened to Christ, and had been “astonished” at his answers to the Sadducees, would soon publish the tidings of their defeat When the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they doubtless felt pleased that their natural enemies had been routed, but grieved that Jesus had again proved victorious in argument. He had, in one day, baffled

the chief priests and elders of the people, Pharisees and their disciples, Herodians and Sadducees. If he continued to prevail, all the people would be won over to his side. So once more they met in consultation: they were gathered together . They must think of some fresh device, some new plan for his overthrow. How persevering wicked men are in their evil courses! While we deplore their wickedness, let us imitate their persistency.

Matthew 22:35. The one of them, which was a lawyer asked him a question, tempting him, and saying,

Apparently, the result of their conference was that they selected one of their number to put to Jesus another enquiry: one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question. Mark says that this man was one of the scribes, one of those constantly engaged in copying the Law, and also one who explained its meaning to the people. He was a gentleman “learned in the Law.” He came, either as the representative of the Pharisees, or on his own account, and asked Jesus a question, tempting him . Putting the mildest meaning on the word “tempting”, it conveys the idea of testing and trying in an unfriendly sense. Probably he was a man of clearer light and greater discernment than his associates; for he was evidently only half-hearted in the work of “tempting” Christ. Mark says that he had heard our Lord’s words to the Sadducees, “and perceiving that he had answered them well,” he put his own question to Jesus. He was evidently a man of candor, possessing a considerable amount of spiritual knowledge. This may help to explain the reason for his question:—

Matthew 22:36. Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

According to the Rabbis, there were many commandments which were secondary, and others which were of the first importance. They often put commands, which really were comparatively small, on a par with those which were greatest. One of them even ventured to say that the commands of the Rabbis were more important than the commands of the Law, because the commands of the Law were little and great, but all the commands of the Rabbis were great. Some of them regarded eating with unwashen hands as being as great a crime as murder; and they would classify the rubbing of ears of corn together on the Sabbath-day with adultery; so that they caused great confusion as to the real order of moral precepts. It was, therefore, most desirable to get from this wise Teacher, whom the scribe addressed as “Master ”, an authoritative answer to the question, “Which is the great commandment in the law? “The enquiry was one which would be sure to entangle the Savior if he did not answer it wisely; and therein the lawyer tempted, tested, tried, and proved him.

Blessed be his dear name, he can stand any test to which he may be put!

Satan tempted, tested, and tried him to the uttermost of his power; but even he never found any flaw, or fault, or failing in him.

Matthew 22:37, 38. Jesus said unto him. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.

These were very familiar words to our Lord’s hearers, for all devout Jews were in the habit of repeating them every morning and evening. Deuteronomy 6:4-9, from which our Savior quoted, was one of the four passages which were worn as “phylacteries” (23:5). Jesus, said unto him, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. ” Because he is our God, Jehovah claims our heart’s love. As our Creator, Preserver, Provider, and Judge, he commands us to yield to him all our heart’s affection; to love him first, best, heartiest; out of all comparison to the love we have to any fellow-creature, or to ourselves. “And with all thy soul. ” We are to love God with all our life, to love him more than our life; so that, if necessary, we would give up our life rather than give up our love to God. “And with all thy mind. ” We are to love God with our intellect, with all the powers of our mind, bringing memory, thought, imagination, reason, judgment, and all our mental powers, as willing subjects to bow at God’s feet in adoration and love. “This is the first and great commandment. ” It is “first” in point of time, for it was binding upon the angels before man was created; it was binding upon Adam from the hour of his creation in the image of God. It is “first” in importance, for there is no love to a creature worthy of comparison with love to the Creator. This commandment is also “great”, because it comprehends all others, and because its demands are so great, namely, the whole love of our heart, and soul, and mind.

Who can render to God this perfect love? None of our fallen race.

Salvation by the words of the Law is clearly an impossibility, for we cannot obey even the first commandment. There is One who has obeyed it, and the obedience of Christ is reckoned as, the obedience of all who trust him.

Being free from legal condemnation, they seek ever after to obey this “great and first commandment” (R.V.) by the power of the Holy Spirit, who dwells within them.

Matthew 22:39. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

The answer is wider than the question. The lawyer asked about “the great commandment”; Christ answered his enquiry, and then added, “and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. ” Who of us has really loved his neighbor as himself? Under the Gospel this commandment is certainly not less binding than under

Matthew 22:40. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

The teaching of Moses and all the prophets might be summarized in “these two commandments. ” The duty of loving God and loving our neighbor as we love ourselves is the supreme subject of the divine revelation. On this, as on a great peg, “hang all the law and the prophets. ” Remove the peg, and what have you left as a support for the teaching given by the Lord through the holy men of old who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost?

MATTHEW 22:41-46 THE KING ASKING QUESTIONS

Matthew 22:41, 42. While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David.

‘The King now carried the war into the enemy’s country. He had answered all the questions put to him; it was his turn to propound some to those who had come to examine him. While the Pharisees were gathered together, that is, while they still lingered near him, disappointed and defeated, yet watching for any opportunity of assailing him, Jesus asked them, saying, “What think ye of Christ, ” “Our Lord here sets his servants the example of how they should deal with cavilers, quibblers, objectors. Having wisely answered all their questions, he pressed home upon them the question of questions: “What think ye of Christ?” They had tried to puzzle him with their enquiries about Church and State, the future life, and the relative value of the commandments; but he put to them the much more vital question, “What think ye of Christ?”

Jesus also pressed upon his hearers further enquiry about “the Christ” (R.V.), for the words used evidently mean the Messiah: “Whose son is he? ” They say unto him “The son of David. ” They knew that the promised Deliverer would be descended from David; but they either did not know, or would not confess, that he had a divine as well as a human origin. This the Savior brings out by further questions.

Matthew 22:43-45. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?

These questions of our Lord themselves contain the answers to the present-day critics who deny the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, and the Davidic authorship and Messianic application of certain Psalms. He saith unto them, “How then doth David in spirit call him Lord? ” quoting from Psalm 110:1, “saying, The LORD said unto My Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool, ” our Savior declared that these were the words of David, speaking “by the Holy Ghost” (see Mark 12:36), concerning the Christ, the Messiah. This ought for ever to settle the question about the inspiration, authorship, and application of that Psalm at least. “The LORD said unto my Lord,” — Jehovah said unto my Adonai: David, by the Holy Ghost; learned what the Father said unto the Son; and thus he was brought into connection with the whole sacred Trinity. “Sit thou on my right hand”: the Messiah was bidden to rest after his great mediatorial work was accomplished, and to sit on his Father’s right hand, in the place of honor, power, and majesty. “Till I make thine enemies thy footstool”: Jesus is to keep his seat till his foes are all prostrate at his feet.

This was the problem the Pharisees had to solve: if the Messiah was David's Son, how was it that David, by the Holy Ghost, called him his Lord? The Christ must be something more than mere man; otherwise the Psalmist's words would have been unsuitable, and even blasphemous. He was higher than the angels, for unto none of them did Jehovah ever stay, "Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Hebrews 1:13).

Matthew 22:46. And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.

If the Pharisees could have denied that the Psalm had reference to the Messiah , it would have been easy for them to reply to Christ 's question ; but no man was able to answer him a word. The Rabbis of our Savior 's day admitted that this was one of the Messianic Psalms , without recognizing what their admission involved ; in later times , as at the present day , false teachers sought to wrest it from its proper meaning .

Christ's questions silenced his adversaries in a double sense; first, they could not answer him a word; and next, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any He remained Master of the field. They could not entrap or entangle him in his talk; if they would put him to silence, they must do it by putting him to death.