

11th June 2023

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Love the LORD Your God

6 These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, ² so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. ³ Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, promised you.

⁴ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Matthew 22:15-46

Paying the Imperial Tax to Caesar

¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. ¹⁶ They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. “Teacher,” they said, “we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. ¹⁷ Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?”

¹⁸ But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, “You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? ¹⁹ Show me the coin used for paying the tax.” They brought him a denarius, ²⁰ and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?”

²¹ “Caesar’s,” they replied.

Then he said to them, “So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”

²² When they heard this, they were amazed. So, they left him and went away.

Marriage at the Resurrection

²³ That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. ²⁴ “Teacher,” they said, “Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for him. ²⁵ Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. ²⁶ The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. ²⁷ Finally, the woman died. ²⁸ Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?”

²⁹ Jesus replied, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. ³⁰ At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. ³¹ But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, ³² ‘I am the God of

Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

³³ When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.

The Greatest Commandment

³⁴ Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. ³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

³⁷ Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Whose Son Is the Messiah?

⁴¹ While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, ⁴² "What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son, is he?"

"The son of David," they replied.

⁴³ He said to them, "How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him 'Lord'? For he says,

⁴⁴ "'The Lord said to my Lord:

"Sit at my right hand
until I put your enemies
under your feet.'"

⁴⁵ If then David calls him 'Lord,' how can he be his son?" ⁴⁶ No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Sermon: The King's Defence (Deuteronomy 6:1-9 and Matthew 22:15-46)

Please have your **Bibles** open at **Matthew 22:15-46**

You should have a **sermon outline** to take notes if you wish.

Let me **pray** first...

Intro/Context

This morning we're going to be talking **about 3 questions** - that Jesus' **opponents ask Him** - and - **1 question** - that Jesus asks His opponents

We have to be careful when we **ask** questions - we **might not always like the answer.**

We also have to be careful when we **answer** questions - we **might get ourselves in trouble**

When my dear **mum** used to get her **hair done**, she would often ask Dad '***do you like my hair?***'

Oooh

Could be tricky

Does she really want an honest answer?

I'd be thinking '***careful how you answer that, Dad***'

My Dad, for some reason - only known to him - would answer '***your hair looks nice at the back***'

Oooh

Not the best answer Dad!

I'd be thinking '***she's not going to like that answer, Dad!***'

He left himself wide open

Mum would say

What about the front of my hair? What about the colour? What about the style?

A can of worms!

(pause)

Other questions **fraught with danger** – are questions like:

'Does this dress make me look fat?'

'What did you think of my sermon?'

(pause)

Let's have a look at the **three** questions that Jesus' opponents **ask** Him

And let's understand the **reason** they ask these questions is because Jesus has told parables in Matthew 21 and 22 – which have **rattled the cages of the religious leaders** – because the **parables say** – these religious leaders will be excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven!

Question of Two Kingdoms (Matt 22:15-22)

The **first question** comes from the **Pharisees and Herodians**

The **Pharisees** were an **influential religious group within Israel** who **followed the written law** in scripture plus **oral tradition** handed down over the centuries. They **opposed Roman rule** but complied and were **popular with the people**.

The **Herodians** were a **political group** that **supported Herod Kings dynasty** and submitted to **Roman rule**.

Even though the Pharisees and Herodians didn't get on - they **come together** in vv15-16 – and they “**butter up**” Jesus

Then comes their **loaded question** in verse 17

Slide 1A-Question

“Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?”

The **tax** they are referring to is a **poll tax** paid by every male between the age of 14 and 65 – and it was an **unpopular tax**

It seems that whatever way Jesus answers their question, **He will be in bother!**

If Jesus said it was **unlawful to pay this tax** – they **would report Him to the Roman officials as a rebellious person** and He would be **arrested**.

If Jesus said it was **lawful to pay this tax** – He would be **discredited by many of the people**. To the Jews, **God was the only King** – to pay tax to a **foreign king** was to admit the validity of this foreign rule and was an insult to God!

Jesus knew their evil intentions (v18) – He hadn't fallen for their flattery– and He **calls them hypocrites** – they butter him up – but **all the time they are trying to trap Him!**

Jesus wisely asks whose image and inscription is on the coin they have (a silver coin – a denarius). They produce a coin with **Caesar's image** on it.

Jesus' reply is stunning – verse 21

Slide 1b-Answer

“Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's”

Here Jesus – doesn't lay down a rule as such – but instead a wise principle – which we still use to this day!

The timeless principle Jesus teaches here is that every Christian has a double citizenship and belongs to two kingdoms.

A Christian is a citizen of the country/kingdom they live in – and to that country they owe respect and honour to the rulers of that country for **keeping them safe through law and order** and for the services the government provide – medical facilities, education, roads, water, electricity and so on.

But a Christian is also a citizen of Heaven and **owes allegiance and honour to God**.

I'd like to give us **three lessons** we can learn from Jesus' principle here.

Slide 1c-Lessons

a. 1st - **Christians must honour and obey rulers**. See Romans 13; 1 Peter 2:13-17; 1 Timothy 2:1ff. We **must respect our earthly rulers** (or elected leaders), **obey the law, pay taxes, and pray for all in authority**.

b. 2nd - **Christians must honour and obey God**. Kings, PMs, Emperors are not God. **Governments should not enforce or restrict religion** (as happened in Acts

5:27-29 where the apostles were told to stop teaching about Jesus – the apostles replied “**we must obey God rather than human beings**”).

The best citizen honours their country because they worship God.

But where Governments command their people to do things contrary to the Bible – **Christians do not need to comply** – e.g. If the government says: we can't read the Bible – or we can't teach what the Bible says – or that we can't worship – **our allegiance is to God first – not the government**.

During COVID – the government made restrictions on worship – for safety reasons – they didn't go as far as saying we can't worship – but we couldn't meet together for a while and when we could meet again, we couldn't sing. We **have to be wise in the use of Jesus' principle** here.

It's **much easier for us here in Australia** – than in say **North Korea, Afghanistan and China** – where there are major restrictions and almost a total ban on Christians – who **have to worship in secret!**

c. 3rd - **Humans bear God's image and owe God everything.**

Caesar's image was on the coin but God's image is on humans (Genesis 1:26-27). Sin has marred that image but through faith in Jesus, it can be restored (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:27) – by being clothed in Jesus' righteousness and being a new creation (just like the wedding clothes from last week's parable). **We are God's image bearers and His ambassadors and we need to represent Jesus in thought, word and deed – in order to attract others to follow Jesus!**

Question about this life & the resurrected life (Matt 22:23-33)

The **second question** comes from another group called the **Sadducees**

The **Sadducees** were an **aristocratic class** connected with everything going on in the temple in Jerusalem. They tended to be **wealthy and held powerful positions**, including that of chief priests and high priest, and they held the majority of the 70 seats of the **ruling council** called the **Sanhedrin**.

The **Sadducees** worked hard to keep the peace by agreeing with the decisions of Rome.

The **Sadducees** only followed the first five books of the Old Testament and **did not follow the oral traditions** – like the Pharisees did.

The **Sadducees** denied any idea of the resurrection because they couldn't find any evidence of the resurrection in the first five books of the Scriptures. They also **did not believe in the spiritual world** -and **therefore did not believe** in the existence of angels or demons.

So, they come to Jesus with a **loaded question** – in verses 23-28 - to **mock the idea of a resurrected life**.

Slide 2a-Question

They ask Jesus a **hypothetical question** – if seven brothers in turn marry the same woman, who is widowed by each of them; so, whose wife will she be, at the resurrection, since all of them were married to her at one stage?

Their question is based on a provision in law in Deuteronomy 25:5-19. The purpose of the law was to **preserve a man's name** should he die without a male heir. In Israel, family inheritance was a major thing, it was important that each

home have an heir. It was considered a disgrace for a man to refuse to raise up a family for his dead brother.

Their question was **meant to embarrass Jesus** – their thinking was “***okay if you believe in the resurrection – how can the woman have seven husbands in the resurrected life?***”

Even though the Sadducees think they have trapped Jesus

He answers their question quite **easily with two points**

Slide 2b-Answers

- a. 1st - At the resurrection - **people will neither marry nor be given in marriage**. There's no need for marriage because - as a body of believers (Jesus' Church) - we're married to Jesus in Heaven – and we don't need to have children – because all the people who believe and are saved are already there – and will live forever. And besides **Jesus says we will be heavenly beings like angels when we are in Heaven**

 - b. 2nd – Also Jesus quotes from Exodus 3:6 – where God speaks to Moses and God says “***I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob***”.
- Jesus' point is God says I **am** – not I **was** - - so God is saying even though Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have all died before Moses came along – they are still alive – and that means - **God is the God of the living not the dead**!

And notice - Jesus quotes from one of the 5 books the Sadducees actually **believe** – so the idea of resurrection IS in those 5 books!

Again, **some lessons** for us here from Jesus' teaching

Slide 2c-Lessons

a. 1st - Like Jesus – we **must go to God's Word** to answer people's questions.

Which means we need to spend time to get to know God's Word.

b. 2nd - We **must not speculate** about our resurrected life in Heaven and instead, rest on the authority of God's Word. We **must not** think of our resurrected life in terms of our earthly life or as an extension on our earthly life; our resurrected life will be completely different!

Question of our relationship with God & others (Matt 22:34-40)

The **third question** comes from the **Pharisees** – who are likely very happy that Jesus **silenced the Sadducees!**

A law expert from the Pharisees – asks another tricky question in verse 36

Slide 3a-Question

“Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Their **motive** in v35 is again to **“test”** Jesus!

This was **not a new question**; the law experts had been debating this for centuries.

Jesus **again** - goes back to God's Word – and in v37 - Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy 6:4-5 – a section of scripture known to the Jews as the **“Shema”**

which comes from Hebrew word to “**hear**” – a section of scripture that every child recites:

Slide 3b-Answers

⁴ Hear, O Israel: The **LORD** our God, the **LORD** is one. ⁵ Love the **LORD** your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

But Jesus cannot separate the principle of loving God – from the principle of loving our neighbour. So, Jesus in verse 39 also quotes from Leviticus 19:18 – “*love your neighbour as yourself*”

Jesus ties both of these commands together – loving God and loving our neighbour. For Him, they go hand in hand – and they summarize all the Bible’s teachings.

In other words - part of loving God – is to also love our neighbour.

So, how can we love God with all our heart, soul and strength?

Slide 3c-Lessons

Just like any relationship – we can’t love someone - unless we know them properly and spend time with them. So again, it’s back to us – spending time with God in His Word and in prayer – and wanting to be like Jesus!

What about loving our neighbour – who is our neighbour?

Is our neighbour – just fellow believers?

Again – let’s go back to God’s Word

Back in Matthew 8 – Jesus healed a Roman Centurion’s servant and a demon-possessed man from the Gentile area of Gadarene.

Back in Matthew 15 – Jesus healed a **Syrophoenician** (Canaanite) woman!

So, Jesus didn't just love His fellow Jews – did He?

If we love all people in our community – showing them the love of Jesus – **we may win them for Jesus – and they come and follow Him!**

Jesus is saying the way forward for us is - simply to **LOVE!**

What's **our vision** for our Church? [**In the bulletin**]

It's actually not our vision – it's Jesus' vision!

(pause)

There we have it – **Jesus tackles three curly questions** – **no problem at all.**

Now **Jesus** asks **the Pharisees** a question.

Jesus' question about the Messiah (Matt 22:41-46)

Look at verse 42

Slide 4a-Question

“What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son, is he?”

Quite rightly as experts in the Law, they understood Old Testament scripture to refer to the Messiah under the term “**Son of David**” (we can find that in 2 Samuel 7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Isaiah 9:6-7)

So that is how they reply ***“The son of David”***

But **Jesus challenges their answer** – again by going back to God's Word

In v43-44 - Jesus quotes from **Psalm 110:1**

“How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him ‘Lord’? For he says,

44 “The Lord said to my Lord:

“Sit at my right hand

until I put your enemies

under your feet.”

Every orthodox Jewish scholar interpreted that **this verse referred to the Messiah** (God’s chosen anointed ONE) and **only the Messiah could sit at the right hand of God.**

Jesus’ question to them is “***If the Messiah is David’s son (as they answered) then how could the Messiah also be David’s Lord?***”

Slide 4b-Answer

There is only one answer to that question: **As God, the Messiah is David’s Lord – and as Man, the Messiah is David’s son!**

What Jesus is showing them and us – here – is that He is more than just a good bloke and a brilliant teacher – He is the Messiah and He is both God and Man!
No wonder – no one in v46 – is game enough to ask any more questions!

For us it means – Jesus is not just King David’s Lord – **He is our Lord** – and **must be Lord of our lives!**

Are we taking that truth seriously?

(pause)

Conclusion – A Matter of Balance

Slide 5-Conclusion

Just **one more thought** – I think it's worth us pondering on - as we leave church this morning.

Jesus has a remarkable way **of balancing things**:

He maintains a balance between **loyalty to Caesar** and **loyalty to God** – a balance between **politics** and **religion** – between **church** and **state**

A balance between **this world** and **the next** – between **His humanity** and **His deity**

A perfect balance **in loving God** and **loving others**

A balance in his appeal to **young people** and **old** – **to men** and **women** - **to rich** and **poor** – **to the sick** and **the healthy** - **to Jews** and **Gentiles**

A balance between the **physical needs** and **spiritual needs of people**

A wonderful balance between **faith** and **works**

A wonderful balance - between **truth** and **grace** – **a sensitivity to what is true** - and yet **a sensitivity towards people and where they are at.**

Perhaps we could prayerfully consider how we maintain balance in our lives - as we imitate our Lord Jesus...

Let's pray

Thank you that Jesus is both God and Man.

Thank you that Jesus has a remarkable way of balancing things

Help us as we imitate Jesus

*That we are able to balance loving and obeying our earthly rulers and loving you
– and making you our priority*

Help us to be worthy image bearers of you

Help us to always come back to your word for wisdom and answers

Help us to hunger and thirst to be more like Jesus

*And help us to show the love of Jesus in our community – so more people come
to follow Him.*

In His name, we pray. Amen