

Religious leaders respond
Matthew 22:15—33

Jesus arrived in Bethany six days before the Passover (John 12:1) and spent the next several days going onto Jerusalem by day and returning to Bethany at night. Five days before the Passover Jesus made His so-called Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. Four days before Passover Jesus cursed the fig tree and cleaned out the temple. Three days before Passover He was in the temple confronting the religious leaders, telling them through parables that He was the Christ and by whose authority He was teaching. He emphasized what their fate will be if they continue to reject His teaching.

The last parable Jesus taught was about the wedding feast. The first call that went out related to Jesus and His Disciples going to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:6; 15:24). They became lost sheep years ago because the shepherds put in charge (the religious leaders) weren't doing their job (Jeremiah 50:6). The second call went out after Christ's ascension. It was at this point that everything was said to be ready, an indication that the wedding was very close. This correlates to the timing in Daniel's prophecy of 490 years. The Tribulation and Second Coming would prophetically follow a short time after His ascension. I believe the Tribulation would have started at Stephen's stoning as indicated by Jesus standing in preparation of pouring out His wrath on the world (Psalm 7:6; 110:1). Instead of wrath, the world experienced God's grace with the beginning of this Mystery Age as revealed through Paul (Romans 16:25; Ephesians 3:1—8; Colossians 1:25—27).

Contrary to popular thinking, the third call is not related to this present Church age but is a continuation of calls one and two to Israel. The formation of the Body of Christ temporarily breaks God's prophetic dealings with Israel. He will finish out the prophetic program after the Church is raptured to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:7). The final call in this parable is made after the rapture and appears to go out to the whole world. I believe this will be accomplished during the Tribulation and involves the 144,000 Jews who seemingly are sent out to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom to the world (Matthew 24:14). This call is to the Jewish nation and, I believe, any Gentiles who would like to go into the Kingdom. The Gentiles who will be able to be guests at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb are those in (Matthew 25:34—40).

We now pick up with the religious leader's response to Jesus' parables.

Tribute to Caesar (verses 15—22)

The only thing these hard-hearted religious leaders can think about is how to get rid of the troublemaker who is causing the people to see their failings. According to verse 15 the Pharisees instigated a meeting with the Herodians to find a way to get rid of Jesus. The Herodians are a political (not religious) group who are supporters of the Roman Herods (emperors). The Pharisees were concerned that the People would turn against them and they would lose their status while the Herodians were worried that Jesus would usurp the authority of the Romans rulers. The Pharisees sent their disciples with the Herodians to trip up Jesus with an innocent sounding but loaded question. They came to Him in false humility complimenting Him for the great truths He's been teaching and praised Him for being so honest regardless of who He was dealing with. This was designed to get Him to let down His guard and feel free to say what was on His mind. Their question was about loyalty. Should people be loyal to government or to God? Should we pay taxes to Caesar? Obviously they thought He would be against giving money to Rome because He was seen as a rebel who would not want to give allegiance to any other king but Himself while the Pharisees hoped He would tell the Herodians that a man needed to pay homage to the Herod and by so doing they would have an opportunity to criticize Him for not putting God first.

Jesus knew that they were attempting to trap Him then asked for a coin. The coin had an image of Caesar on it and Jesus told them to give to Caesar those things that belong to Caesar and to God the things that are

God's. Neither the Herodians nor the Pharisees could use His answer to ensnare Him and they marveled at how He was able to slip through their trap so skillfully.

Marriage in Heaven (verses 23—33)

It was now the Sadducees' turn to test Jesus and try to cause Him to say something that would cause the people to turn against Him. The Sadducees did not believe in an afterlife and therefore there would be no resurrection. Death for them was the end of existence. They believed there was nothing beyond this life, no heaven, no angels, no Satan. Their question of testing was designed to highlight the absurdity of even thinking there was a resurrection. The Mosaic Law protects women and inheritances by building in regulations to keep others from obtaining more land than they should have. One of the prescribed ways is to allow the woman's brother-in-law to take her as his wife if his brother were to die. He was to make sure the woman would give birth thus assuring her and her family a continuation of inheritance rights (Deuteronomy 25:5). The Sadducees' asked Jesus what if she remarried seven times? Whose wife would she be in the resurrection?

Jesus' answer assumes there is an afterlife when He says that those who have died will be like angels who do not marry. He chided them for not knowing Scripture. He continued to prove that Scripture shows Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as alive with the story of Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3:6 when God introduced Himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jesus told the Sadducees that God is a God to the living, not the dead. If they had read and studied Scripture correctly they would have understood that there is life beyond the grave. Instead, they read Scripture with the assumption that this earth is all there is. This way of thinking abrogates any moral responsibility. Why behave if there is no judgment after death?

The concept of resurrection is found in many passages in the Old Testament. Perhaps the first (or oldest) reference is found in Job 19:25—26. These verses also make it clear that Job's Redeemer will stand on the earth in the latter days. Isaiah 26:19 also states that the dead will come back to life. Daniel 12:2 is the first mention in Scripture that there will be a resurrection of the righteous and unrighteous.

As a side note, marriage is a God-given institution (Genesis 2:22—24; Matthew 19:4—6). According to God (Second Person of the Trinity as creator of man and woman) it is to be between one man and one woman and is to last a lifetime. Adam was given Eve to be a helper to him (Genesis 2:18) and then they were told to fill the earth (Genesis 1:28). Obviously a homosexual couple will find it impossible to live by these purposes of marriage. They can certainly act as helpers for each other but they would not be able to populate the earth. Of course, this does not mean that couples unable to bear children or couples that have no desire to bear children should not get married. It does mean that couples of the same sex cannot be married in God's eyes. Man has no authority to change the definition of marriage and same-sex couples who do go through a wedding ceremony are not technically married because God does not recognize their union as a marriage as He defined.

Since one reason to marry is procreation it makes sense that in heaven there will be no marriage. If babies were born in heaven they could not be able choose their eternal destiny. God does not force this on anyone but allows people to choose whom they would like to serve. Even spirit beings (angels) were able to choose where they wanted to spend eternity. The two reasons for marriage are to be a help to each other and to populate the earth. This won't be needed in eternity.

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