

Matthew 21-22 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

Outline of Matthew

I. JESUS' EARLY YEARS	1-2
II. JESUS' GALILEAN MINISTRY	3-18
III. JESUS' JUDEAN MINISTRY	19-20
IV. JESUS' LAST WEEK	21-27
V. THE RESURRECTION	28

IV. JESUS' LAST WEEK	21-27
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A. <i>The Triumphal Entry</i>	21:1-11
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CHAPTER 21

Jesus and the disciples are reaching the end of the well-traveled road that leads from Jericho to Jerusalem.

The road climbs the backside of the Mt. of Olives, and crests the hill at the villages of Bethany & Bethphage – two little hamlets that sit a short distance away from Jerusalem.

¹ Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives,

Bethphage means 'house of figs.'

then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose *them* and bring *them* to Me. ³ And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them."

This takes place at the beginning of Passover week.

Jewish pilgrims from all over the world flooded into Jerusalem at this time of year to celebrate Judaism's most important festival. It's estimated that as many as 2½ million Jews came to Jerusalem every year at this time.

Bethphage, Bethany and every other village, town, and city within a few miles of Jerusalem was jam packed with pilgrims.

Many of them couldn't afford to pay for lodging, so they camped out on the hillsides surrounding Jerusalem - the most popular spot of all was the Mt. of Olives.

As we've seen in Matthew's gospel so far, Jesus usually down-played the publicity people wanted to shower on Him.

He avoided the limelight & withdrew when the attention & acclaim grew too loud.

He did that to *delay* the inevitable opposition such public attention would generate on the part of the Jewish authorities.

But now that He's coming to the end of His time of ministry, He no longer works to quiet the public acclamations of Him being the Messiah – on the contrary, He seems to *encourage* them with His actions here.

As they approached the outskirts of Bethphage, Jesus sent two of the disciples into the village to collect a donkey & its colt.

The reason why both are brought is because Jesus intends to ride the colt, but

because it's young, it won't go anywhere yet without its mother.
The reason Jesus will ride the *colt* instead of the older donkey is because, as Mark makes clear in his gospel, no one had ever sat on the colt before, thus making it a fitting mount for the Messiah.
It seems Jesus had made arrangements with the owner of this colt prior to this.
Either that or the owner was a godly man who would recognize in the disciple's words the leading & authority of the Lord Himself.
The *reason* Jesus called for this colt is explained by Matthew –

4 All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: ⁵ “Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.’ ” ⁶ So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them.

Matthew combines 2 prophecies here – one from Isaiah & another from Zechariah. [Isa. 62:11 & Zech. 9:9]

Jesus *purposely* moved to fulfill these prophecies which foretold how the Messiah would enter Jerusalem when He came.

The main reason Jesus staged His coming this way was because *the day* this occurred, what we know as Palm Sunday & the Triumphal Entry, the *very day itself* - had been foretold by the prophet Daniel in 9:24-27.

These prophecies from Isaiah & Zechariah set the stage for the popular expectation of the Messiah.

By fulfilling this prophecy, and so the common peoples' expectations, Jesus was challenging the national & religious leaders to a necessary showdown, making them take a public stand either *accepting or rejecting* Him.

When a king makes his grand entrance into a conquered city, or when he returns home after a successful military campaign, he enters the city *on a horse* – usually the biggest war horse available.

When Jesus chose a mount to present Himself as Israel's King, He didn't take the Roman commander's stallion from the Antonio Fortress. He picked a young donkey.

It was right that as Israel's King He *ride* in, but His kingdom was not a military force that would conquer with the power of the sword.

His kingdom is not about earthly force & power; it's about love & service – so what better animal than a donkey?

7 They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set *Him* on them. ⁸ And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread *them* on the road. ⁹ Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: “*Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ Hosanna in the highest!*”

There was a vast multitude on the Mt., lining the way into Jerusalem because of the Passover.

As Jesus crested the top of the Mt. the crowd quickly picked up the word that

the Messiah was coming – Jesus of Nazareth, the marvelous wonder worker from the North.

And He was riding a colt, just as the prophets foretold. So word raced on ahead, and the people began lining the pathway from the Mt. down into the Kidron Valley and up the side of the hill that leads to the gate into Jerusalem.

The words they shouted are drawn from Psalm 118 – a Messianic Psalm and one that was well known at that time as applying to the Messiah when He came as King.

That's why the people began to shout it here.

Here's the whole thing –

19 Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them, And I will praise the LORD. ²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD, Through which the righteous shall enter. ²¹ I will praise You, For You have answered me, And have become my salvation. ²² The stone *which* the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. ²³ This was the LORD's doing; It *is* marvelous in our eyes. ²⁴ This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it. ²⁵ Save now, [Hosanna] I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity. ²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We have blessed you from the house of the LORD.

The people cried out, “**Hosanna!** = **Save Now!**” but what they meant was salvation from political & military tyranny.

They hoped for a Messiah-King who would rally the nation in a mighty campaign to oust the Romans and regain their national independence.

Jesus came for salvation all right – just not the salvation they expected.

He came to bring salvation from sin, to reverse the curse, and so bring liberation, not just to Israel but to mankind.

What's interesting is that Jesus received and even encouraged this worship and the loud, public acclamations of His title as Messiah.

The reason why is because as Psalm 118:24 says, this was “*the day that the Lord has made*”, the day when the Messiah would come as Savior to Jerusalem in fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy.

10 And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, “Who is this?” ¹¹ So the multitudes said, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.”

Though Jesus knows the opposition of the Pharisees & Sadducees against Him has reached its climax and will soon move in the plot to kill Him, He doesn't sneak into the city – He comes in the very most public and open way; everyone in Jerusalem was now talking about Him and noising abroad His arrival.

B. Clearing The Temple, Again! 21:12-17

12 Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. ¹³

And He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’”

Jesus had cleared the temple of all this merchandising a little over 3 years before when He first began His work.

The priests who oversaw and permitted this trade had allowed the merchants to set up their little stalls and booths once more.

And Jesus, coming now to the temple, that most sacred of all places on earth, once again finds the holy grounds of the house of God a place of crass-marketing and money-making.

As Jesus went about His task of clearing the temple, He quoted 2 passages as the basis of His authority – Isaiah 56:7 which says –

7 Even [the Gentiles] I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices *Will be* accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.”

It was in the Court of the Gentiles that the merchants had set up shop.

Then Jesus quoted just a phrase from Jeremiah 7 where the prophet had denounced the priests of his day for the very same shenanigans these priests were doing . .

8 “Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. 9 Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know, 10 and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, ‘We are delivered to do all these abominations’? 11 Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen *it*,” says the LORD.

I won’t go into it now – just suffice it to say that the priests had worked out a sweet deal with a bunch of merchants to rip off the people who came to the temple to worship.

Prices were terribly inflated so the merchants got rich and gave a kick-back of their profits to the priests who controlled what took place on the temple grounds.

Everyone knew the whole scene was nothing but a slick rip off scheme, including the common people who came to worship and were getting ripped off.

The result was that the people were growing angry about worship and were seeing the whole temple service as nothing but a means of greed for the priests.

Jesus was furious that the name & fame of God was being besmirched in this way & went through the temple grounds up-ending the tables, tearing down the booths.

The temple was supposed to be a place of prayer & worship – it had been turned into a hangout of rip-off artists.

The church should take careful note of what Jesus did here & make sure it never misrepresents the nature of character of God – it must certainly never be turned into just a machine to fund someone’s greed.

This story of Jesus clearing the temple pretty much destroys the “Sunday School

Jesus” whose only quality is a bland kind of acceptance of everyone and everything.

In the two times He cleared the temple, not one opposed Him or was able to thwart His course among the stalls and booths.

14 Then *the blind and the lame* came to Him in the temple, and He healed them.

Why weren't they fearful of the angry Jesus who'd just stormed through the temple courts?

Because they, along with everyone else, knew Jesus was totally right and justified in what he'd done!

This reveals the huge rift that existed between the priests and the people.

No one thought Jesus was just angry for anger's sake; what He'd done in the clearing the temple was something the common people would have loved to do because they knew it was a holy outrage!

Jesus once again proves Himself the advocate and Savior of the common man.

So, as soon as His campaign to clear the temple courts ends, the needy come to Him for His touch – and He once again healed all who came.

As I mentioned, this is the second time Jesus cleared the temple of that which was unworthy of the Lord.

As the NT makes clear, now that Christ has come, the real temple, the enduring dwelling place of the Lord is us – His people.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 - ¹⁶ Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷ If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which *temple* you are.

1 Corinthians 6:19 - ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

2 Corinthians 6:16 - ¹⁶ And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "*I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.*"

Ephesians 2:19-22 - ¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Just as Jesus came to the temple in Jerusalem and cleared it of all that which was unworthy of the name of God, so we find that occasionally the Holy Spirit comes to us finds that within us which needs to be cleared out because it's unworthy of Him.

The best thing to do when sensing the conviction of the Lord that there's stuff in

our lives that displeases Him is to move *immediately* and *definitely* to root it out.

Jesus didn't sit down and convene a committee on temple grounds reforms. He didn't enter into negotiations with the priests on a gradual withdrawal of the merchants over a few months.

He went to work and removed what needed to be removed immediately!

There was even a holy violence to His actions!

When the Lord convicts us of sin, the best repentance is quick & complete repentance.

15 But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant ¹⁶ and said to Him, "Do You hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes. Have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise'?"

The reaction of the priests is telling – they had *no problem* with the way God's name was being *defamed* by their greed-factory which Jesus had shut down, but they were *outraged* by the Lord being praised!

Matthew tells us that it was the children who continued to cry out the words of Messianic expectation on the temple grounds.

Have you noticed that about young children – they will keep a thing going long after adults have stopped?

These children are still excited about the news that the Messiah has come and they are giving voice to what their parents have not begun to hush up about – for fear of the attention of the priests!

But the kids lack the sophistication to stay quiet and avoid the wrath of the leaders; they keep shouting the words that have carried Jesus across the Kidron valley and into the temple.

The priests are indignant because they know the words are to be reserved for the Lord Himself when He comes – and they do not at all accept Jesus' claim to being the Messiah and Lord.

So they challenge Him – how can He allow the people to shout praise that is reserved for God alone?

Jesus says to them in effect - "Yes! Sweet isn't it?!?" He's accepting it – affirming it – telling the priests the people are correct in addressing their praise to Him.

This then becomes the crucial turning point in the priests' opposition to Jesus for He has made it crystal clear to them that He is claiming to be none other than God.

17 Then He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and He lodged there.

Most likely, Jesus and the disciples went and stayed with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus whose home was in Bethany, no more than 2 miles away.

C. The Fig Tree 21:18-22

18 Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. ¹⁹

And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, “Let no fruit grow on you ever again.” Immediately the fig tree withered away.

What’s going on here? Is Jesus just not a morning person? Is He being cranky?

Not at all! This entire thing was a huge object lesson for the disciples.

Just as Jesus had used *spoken* parables this was an *acted-out* parable.

First of all, figs were one of the most common foods for this region.

There were fig trees all over – in fact, Bethphage, the sister village to Bethany means “House of figs.”

As Jesus and the disciples made their way along the path from Bethany back in to Jerusalem they dropped down the western slope of the Mt. of Olives and into the Kidron Valley.

Along the roadside was a *lone* fig tree – the language makes it clear this tree was *isolated*, it stood by itself.

The figs of this area have an unusual growth pattern – In mid to late March they sprout leaves and a small pre-fig fruit about the size of an almond.

The fruit ripens right at the time when the leaves fully deploy. So if you saw a leafy fig tree, you could expect there to be plenty of these pre-figs ready for the eatin’.

If none of the pre-figs or ‘*taqsh*’ were produced, then it meant the tree would produce no figs either.

While rather sour, these *taqsh* were a often eaten by the poor.

As Jesus drew near this tree already in full leaf, hungry and ready to munch on some *taqsh*, He saw there wasn’t any fruit.

It was a classic case of *false advertising* – and Jesus cursed it so that it immediately died.

Now, Jesus intended this to be an object lesson for the disciples.

Where were they going? To Jerusalem, the capital of Israel.

Where in Jerusalem were they headed? The temple, the house of God where God is worshipped.

There was a massive beautiful building dedicated to God’s glory.

There was offering and sacrifices being offered.

All the trappings of religion and worship were in full display, but there was no fruit of righteousness – nothing to satisfy the Lord who looks to see if the priests & leaders are indeed leading in a just and righteous way.

So this fig tree becomes a symbol of the nation of Israel, specifically of the *leaders* of the nation.

Just as Jesus inspected this tree and found no fruit on it, He was now coming to Jerusalem to inspect it. It too bore no fruit, and so would know the divine curse.

20 And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, “How did the fig tree wither away so soon?”

Mark again fills in some detail on this story, which Matthew condenses.

Jesus cursed the fig tree, and it was *the next day* as they were passing by it once again that the disciple noticed a visible difference; it was already withering!

They immediately connected Jesus' words from the previous day with the tree's obvious diseased condition and were blown away!

21 So Jesus answered and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' it will be done. 22 And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

Jesus turns the acted out parable of the fig tree, which was meant to set up a lesson for the disciples on the showdown that was about to ensue with the national leaders, into a lesson on faith.

What the Jewish leaders totally lacked, Jesus demonstrated dramatically in the cursing of the fig tree.

Jesus says that if the child of God has genuine faith, they will be able to do what seems impossible.

Now – let's dig a little deeper here because this is a passage which has been badly abused over the years.

Some have taken Jesus' words here and torn them from their context and turned them into something Jesus never intended.

As we saw a few weeks ago when Jesus said much the same thing He said here, a mountain referred to something absolutely stable and rock solid.

In the Jewish mind, if anything was unmovable, it was a mountain!

Yet Jesus says faith can move mountains. The point is that faith can do what seems impossible.

Where people err in understanding this passage is that they think faith is just *wanting* something to be true. They equate *wish-projection* with faith.

They think faith is something you have to work up inside, like a spiritual muscle, and you have to pump it up with a lot of earnestness and fervor.

But real faith, what the Bible means by faith, isn't at all like that.

Faith is very much like one of the senses – it's a passive receiver of spiritual truth.

Sight is only active when there is light; hearing, when there is sound; touch when there is contact with something tangible.

Faith is activated by the presence of truth, which is revealed by scripture.

This is why Romans 10 says that faith comes by hearing God's Word.

Did Jesus say here in v. 21 that faith could move mountains?

Not exactly – He said that the one with faith could say to **THIS** mountain "Move!" and it would.

Where were they standing when Jesus said that, on what mountain? The Mt. of Olives.

Interesting that in Zechariah 14 we read that when the Messiah comes in glory, His foot will touch the top of the Mt. of Olives and the Mt. will split in two, one half will move north, the other side will move south. [v.4]

Then a river will gush forth and flow both toward the Dead Sea in the East and the Mediterranean Sea in the west. [v.8]

Because this is the prophetic word of God, when Jesus comes again, He will speak to the Mt. of Olives and it will move, splitting right down the middle, and large

chunks of it will carried in the massive river that flows forth into both seas. Jesus is not saying here that we can go around ordering just any ole' hill to move just because we want to inflate the value of our real estate or enhance the view out our front window.

He's saying that if we understand clearly what God's Word says and what He wills to do, then we can pray with all confidence knowing that what we pray will come to pass.

The key to this kind of faith is discovering God's will, and that is best discovered by careful application to His Word.

Now, having given that clarification – let's apply this verse as it's meant to be applied – that we ought to pray boldly for those things we know are God's desire, and then go forth to act on them!

D. Jesus' Authority Challenged 21:23-46

1. The challenge by the leaders 21:23

23 Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?"

The leaders simply wanted to know who Jesus thought He was, storming through the temple on a rampage, as though it was His personal residence!

Actually, Jesus had already answered them on this – when He cleared the temple He'd said, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer.'" He was claiming to be the God who'd spoken those words.

Well, these guys just couldn't accept the fact Jesus could be so bold as to make it that obvious, so they question Him again.

2. Jesus' counter-challenge 21:24-27

24 But Jesus answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: ²⁵ The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?"

The question Jesus posed them was on the basis of *John's authority* to do what *he* did.

And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' ²⁶ But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet." ²⁷ So they answered Jesus and said, "We do not know." And He said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.****

This is another brilliant move on Jesus' part!

All along Jesus has been readily answering their questions, even when He knows those questions have been aimed at entrapment.

Now He says, "Okay, you're asking about My Authority. It's only fair that before I answer yet another of your queries, you answer one of Mine. In fact I've got a question that will prove if you're even *capable* of judging whether or not my answer is righteous."

They had asked about His authority – was this even a field they were competent to judge on? Their answer proved they weren't!

Now we're going to read of several encounters of Jesus with the leaders & people of Jerusalem.

This is the showdown, and Jesus pulls no punches in telling some parables that painted those who rejected Him in a very bad light.

3. The parable of the two sons 21:28-32

28 “But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go, work today in my vineyard.’²⁹ He answered and said, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he regretted it and went.³⁰ Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, ‘I go, sir,’ but he did not go.³¹ Which of the two did the will of *his* father?” They said to Him, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you.

The point of this parable is clear: what matters is living for God, not lip service. [1]
The religious leaders were good at religious talk and made a great show of outward piety.

But there was no real obedience to God.

Under the ministry of John & Jesus, it was the sinners & rejects who were entering in to a new & vital relationship with God while the professional religionists were totally left out by their own choice.

32 For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.

When the religious leaders saw all of the sinners repenting and turning to the Lord under John the Baptist's preaching, instead of rejoicing & coming alongside him to support and encourage him, they turned up their noses and proudly huffed off, making all kinds of excuses and dismissing the legitimacy of John's work.

It's appalling when the cultured & wealthy members of a church distance themselves from the new converts who are turning from a lifestyle of sin to the Lord.

I've seen this happen where the Lord will save a gang member, or a child molester or someone else who was deep in sin – and the turn around is so dramatic, they begin reaching out to and bringing their old sinner pals who also get saved and begin growing in the Lord.

And those saints who've walked with Christ for years and have enjoyed the Lord's work of sanctification, *forget* that they were once in a similar place. Or because there may be a slight difference in melanin so the skin's a different shade of brown, and the hair is a different color and they live in different neighborhoods – those who've enjoyed the Lord's bounty for longer think of themselves as *better*, and more the Lord's kind of people who don't want to mix with the new riff-raff.

For the Christian, who are “*My kind* of people”? The saved. The Born Again!

4. The parable of the evil vinedressers 21:33-46

a. 21:33-41 parable told

33 “Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. ³⁴ Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. ³⁵ And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. ³⁶ Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. ³⁷ Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ ³⁸ But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’ ³⁹ So they took him and cast *him* out of the vineyard and killed *him*. ⁴⁰ “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?” ⁴¹ They said to Him, “He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease *his* vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.”

Once again, the message of the parable was that the owner was looking for fruit.

When those who were responsible for giving it refused, they were judged.

Jesus’ point could not have been lost on the Jewish leaders who stood listening.

They were like their forefathers who’d rejected the prophets who’d come to announce the Lord’s Word and call to repentance.

Now the Son had come, and already they were making plans to kill Him.

When Jesus said this, it had to send a chill up their collective spines!

b. 21:42-46 parable applied

42 Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

Then Jesus quotes from Psalm 118 which is the same Psalm the crowd had been applying to Him just a day or two before -

‘The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD ’s doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes’ ? ⁴³ “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. ⁴⁴ And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.” ⁴⁵ Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. ⁴⁶ But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet.

The Jewish leaders were known as the judges of the nation. They were used to sitting in the seat of judgment and saw these encounters with Jesus as building a case against Him.

But Jesus makes it clear here – He is not on trial – they are!

It is their response to Him that will result in their fate!

If they cast themselves in broken dependence on Him, they will be saved.

If they refuse to cast themselves in total dependence on Him, then He will come in crushing judgment on them.

CHAPTER 22

E. Opposition By The Leaders 22-23

1. The parable of the wedding feast 22:1-14

¹And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said:

² “The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, ³ and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. ⁴ Again, he sent out other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.” ’ ⁵ But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. ⁶ And the rest seized his servants, treated *them* spitefully, and killed *them*. ⁷ But when the king heard *about it*, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. ⁸ Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. ⁹ Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.’ ¹⁰ So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding *hall* was filled with guests. ¹¹ “But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. ¹² So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. ¹³ Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ¹⁴ “For many are called, but few are chosen.”

This parable, as is the case for every parable, teaches one lesson – that salvation will go to the unexpected.

It’ll go to them because they respond to the invitation while those who are the expected do not.

This was another illustration showing that the leaders of Israel, the experts in the scriptures, the very guys who ought to have been the most ready and prepared for His coming, were the very ones who were coming up with the lamest reasons why they were rejecting Jesus, just like the first guests in the parable had the most bone-headed reasons why they couldn’t attend the royal wedding of the prince of the kingdom.

Ultimately, this parable was fulfilled in the destruction of Israel by the Romans in 68-70 AD, and how the gospel then went out among the Gentiles.

2. A challenge by the Pharisees 22:15-22

15 Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk.

What idiotic lunacy! Entangle the Word in words! Not likely!

16 And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying,

The Pharisees were the ultra-orthodox Jews of the day and would have nothing to do with Gentiles. There was only one person they hated more than a Gentile, and that was a Jew who collaborated with Gentiles.

The Herodians were Jews who supported Herod. There was a group of Herodians in Jerusalem who were trying to regain the Herodian family control of Judea.

[Herod the Great → kingdom divided → Judea went to direct Roman control under Pilate.]

They were always on the lookout for any Jewish figure who might rise up as a Messianic figure and endanger their claims.

So while the Pharisees and Herodian loathed each other – they were willing to strike up an alliance here because of their united loathing of Jesus.

It's interesting what allies a hatred of God will make.

[They said] “Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men.

They start with a little bit of flattery because they know how well it works.

Jesus has always proven Himself to be one who will never shade the truth just to suit someone's fancy – and they identify that here – hoping to kind of endear themselves to Him and put Him off His guard.

17 Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?”

They thought there was no way to answer this question without getting in trouble.

[Explain – why Herodians were there; as witnesses to make the charge stick.]

18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, “Why do you test Me, you hypocrites?

Their hypocrisy was in their motive and their flattery.

19 Show Me the tax money.” So they brought Him a denarius. 20 And He said to them, “Whose image and inscription is this?” 21 They said to Him, “Caesar's.” And He said to them, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.” 22 When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.

This was an adroit answer that couldn't be faulted.

3. A Challenge by the Sadducees 22:23-33

23 The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, 24 saying: “Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother.

This rule was given because God had allotted the land to the tribes and families of Israel as a permanent assignment.

A family need to have children so the land could be given to them. If a man died without having any children, then it was his brother's duty to raise up children in his name so the land could stay in the family.

The Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection, so they propose this little scenario as a way to prove their point – that resurrection itself is a silly idea and can't work.

25 Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. ²⁶

Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. ²⁷ Last of all the woman died also. ²⁸ Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her."

In their minds, this little scenario proves that the resurrection can't occur because if it did, things like this would be impossible to sort out.

29 Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.

They didn't know the scriptures, which plainly taught the resurrection.

And if they thought that such a thing would be too hard to sort out, then they had no conception of the power of God!

But they missed it altogether in that they thought marriage was an eternal state.

30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven.

Meaning there's no marriage in heaven; not weddings – marriage.

Marriage is for this life, and meant to be a picture of the consummate marriage which is God and His Redeemed.

The purpose of marriage is revealed in Genesis 2:18 – to solve the problem of loneliness!

Since loneliness won't be any threat or problem that troubles us in heaven, the relationship of marriage will be unnecessary.

31 But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ³² 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob' ? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

God didn't say, "I was the God of Abraham." He spoke in the *present tense*, because Abraham was still alive after his physical body gave out and was buried in the cave of Machpelah.

33 And when the multitudes heard *this*, they were astonished at His teaching.

You see, both the Pharisees with their question about paying taxes and the Sadducees with theirs about the resurrection were voicing long running debates and weighty discussions that had seen the experts on all sides weigh in on with no one putting the thing to rest.

Jesus answers them with a succinct word that totally settles the matter – and the people are literally stunned!

4. A challenge by the scribes 22:34-40

34 But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. 35 Then one of them, a lawyer [scribe], asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 36 “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?”

This may have been the biggest debate of the day and one that is proverbial to Judaism.

The rabbis have argued over which is the weightiest command of God since time immemorial.

Since Jesus has dispatched the previous two inquires so handily, the Pharisees again get together and send a scribe with **THE** question of the day.

37 Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

The question had been on which was the greatest commandment, and Jesus answers him, but He adds a bonus – there’s *another* commandment that is necessarily tied to the greatest commandment.

Our love for God, which must occupy our total person; body, soul, and spirit; must take active expression in our love for others who are created in God’s image.

This is what 1 John 4 and the entire book of James is about.

Okay – They’ve been grilling Jesus, it’s only fair He ask a question . . .

5. A challenge by Jesus 22:41-46

41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, 42 saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?” They said to Him, “The Son of David.”

That was an easy one to answer because that was probably the premier Messianic title of the day.

It was drawn from Nathan’s prophecy that the Messiah would be a descendant of David’s who would reclaim his throne and kingdom.

43 He said to them, “How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying:

Then Jesus quotes from the opening of Psalm 110 . . .

44 ‘The LORD [Yahweh] said to my Lord [master], “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool” ’? 45 If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?’ 46 And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.

In the Jewish mind, the father is always greater than the son.

What the son has He was given by the father in one way or another.

So a son or even more, a descendant, would never rise higher than the father or ancestor.

Respect always went back, not forward as far as ancestry went.

So how could David refer to his own descendant as ‘lord/master’?
The answer is simple – the Messiah was both the Son of man and the Son of God.
And while the answer is simple to us, it was mind-bending to them.
From that point on, now one would dare try to trap Him in His words – He’d
proven Himself more than a match for their humble intellects.

[\[1\]](#) Guzik, David – *On-Line Commentary*