

### Jesus Answered the Pharisees

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to those who deny the resurrection that their denial is a result of the unbelief and evil that fills their hearts because they are following the teachings of the Sadducees. In this topic, we will see that the Pharisees made one final attempt to trap Jesus in His words.

The Sadducees and Pharisees were normally in conflict with one another. However, we saw in an earlier topic that they came together to try and trap Jesus. In our topic today, we are going to see that the Pharisees tried to do what the Sadducees had been unable to do. Matthew 22:34-36 says, “But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?’” The rivalry between these two groups probably caused the Pharisees to see this as one more opportunity to show the Sadducees that they could trap Jesus when the Sadducees had failed to trap Him. That rivalry was later illustrated in Acts when both groups wanted to destroy Paul. Acts 23:7-9 says, “And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both. Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees’ party arose and protested, saying, ‘We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God.’”

Here, the Pharisees wanted to prove they could trap Jesus. One of the Pharisees was also a lawyer and a scribe. As a result, he was the one that was chosen to ask Jesus their question in an effort to use his skills as a lawyer to trap Jesus. His question did not sound like a trap as he just asked, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” We see that Jesus answered this question by quoting from the Old Testament. Matthew 22:37-40 says, “Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’” This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: “‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” The first part of this answer came from Deuteronomy 6:4-5. Those verses say, “‘Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.’” Some of the Greek translations added the word mind. Mark 12:29b-30 says, “‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’” This is the first commandment.” We see that Mark included this addition from the Greek translation to show the completeness of love.

Matthew originally wrote his book to show that Jesus had the legal right to be the King of the Jews. This is shown by the genealogy that is given in the first chapter and the many references to the kingdom throughout the book of Matthew. The Jews repeated what is called the Shema every

morning and every evening. This originally was Deuteronomy 6:4. Later, the Shema was expanded to include Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-21 and Numbers 15:37-41. We saw in the previous paragraph that Deuteronomy 6:4 says, “Hear, O Israel: the LORD is our God, the LORD is One.” In Genesis 1:26, we read, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’” In this verse, we see that God speaks of Himself as plural – “Us”, “Our” and “Our”. We refer to God as the triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He created us in His Image by making us one person with spirit, soul and body.

The lawyer had asked Jesus for the great commandment in the law. In these verses, we see that Jesus did not stop after the first and great commandment but went on to say that the second is like it. Then, Jesus quoted part of Leviticus 19:18, which says, “‘You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I *am* the LORD.’” Jesus quoted the part, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” as the second, which is like the first and great commandment. Jesus had taught this same basic principle in the Sermon on the Mount, when He said in Matthew 7:12, “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” Jesus said that these two commands summarized the entire Old Testament. Just a few days later, Jesus gave the disciples a New Commandment which would summarize the whole New Testament. In John 13:34-35, Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

In 1 John 4:19, we read, “We love Him because He first loved us.” We see just how much God loved us in the verse that probably is best known in the New Testament. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” These three commandments given in the paragraph above summarize how we are to respond to God’s love for us. We are to love God with our whole heart, soul and mind. We are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We are to love one another as Christ has loved us. Our “neighbor” would be every person that is not a Christian. One way we show this love is by sharing the good news of the Gospel with them. “One another” would be any person that is a Christian.

Mark tells us what the scribe said when Jesus finished His answer. Mark 12:32-34 says, “So the scribe said to Him, ‘Well *said*, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.’ Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’ But after that no one dared question Him.” Here, we see that this man gave a very thoughtful answer, which shows that Jesus really made him think. We do not know if those thoughts were used by God to later bring this man to true repentance and faith.

Jesus then used this opportunity to ask the Pharisees a question. Matthew 22:41-46 says, “While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, ‘What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?’ They said to Him, ‘The Son of David.’ He said to them, ‘How then does David in the Spirit call Him “Lord,” saying: “The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool’”? If David then calls Him “*Lord*,” how is He his Son?’ And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.” In this question, we see why Mark said that no one dared to question Jesus any more. No one could give an answer to this question. Let us see why that was true.

Many of the Jews were looking for the Messiah to come. The most common title that they had for the Messiah was “The Son of David”. That was how these men answered the first question of Jesus. However, the thought of the people was that this would be a descendent of David who would reestablish the earthly kingdom over which David had ruled. They did not understand that the kingdom of God was going to be an eternal kingdom because they had not realized that the “Son of David” was going to be conceived by the Holy Spirit, so that Jesus would be the God/Man. The angel told Mary, in Luke 1:35, “And the angel answered and said to her, ‘*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.*’”

Jesus quoted Psalm 110:1, which says, “The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’” Then, Jesus asked the Pharisees and others gathered there, “If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?” Jesus also explained why David made this statement. Mark 12:36-37 says, “For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: “The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’” Therefore David himself calls Him “*Lord*”; how is He *then* his Son?’ And the common people heard Him gladly.” First, Jesus said that David made this statement by the Holy Spirit. This meant that He was inspired by the Holy Spirit to call his future descendent “Lord”. In this way, Jesus made it clear that David recognized that his descendent would be God. This meant that His descendent was both God and man. That was one thing that the religious leaders refused to recognize.

We also see that the common people heard Jesus gladly. This gave the religious leaders a second reason not to ask Jesus any more questions. They were driven by their own fear. They were afraid that if they asked any more questions that would give Jesus another opportunity for Him to influence the common people. They were afraid they would lose their control over the people. Just a few weeks earlier, the chief priests and scribes had said, in John 11:48, “If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.” They were afraid that everyone would believe Jesus and that would cause them to lose their control.

The Herodians, the Sadducees and the Pharisees had been silenced because of their own fear. As a result, they did not dare ask Jesus any more questions. This fear was the result of their refusal to repent of their sin of unbelief and come to Jesus in faith. Many people have that same attitude today. In contrast, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to come to Jesus with

boldness, by helping them continue to grow in their understanding of the fact that Christ has given them true spiritual liberty. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children grow in their understanding of these things.