

**The Gospel of Matthew**  
**Week Twenty-Five**  
**Matthew 21:33-22:46**

**Day One**

33 "Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. 34 When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. 35 "The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. 36 Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. 37 Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. 38 "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' 39 So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. 40 "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" 41 "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time."

v. 33 – Jesus once again gives us a lesson in how to win friends and influence people, yet that is not what He came to do. He came to seek and save the lost in the house of Israel and the leaders were trying to thwart His efforts. Jesus never spoke harshly to any sinner; He reserved that for His religious opponents.

Jesus portrayed such a clear picture in this parable that the Pharisees stated the proper conclusion to the story, thus framing Jesus' lesson for them. It is pretty clear who are the characters represented in this story. The Jews were given the things of God to maintain on God's behalf, yet they had taken ownership and were no longer stewards. Now that the Son had come to claim what was rightfully His Father's, the tenants planned on killing the Son, thinking that this would insure their ownership of the property.

The injustice of this was so clear to the listeners that they rendered the proper judgment: the land should be taken from the wretches who opposed the landlord and given to others. **Isn't it interesting that the people understood exactly what Jesus was saying?** They weren't going to repent or change, but they understood. God was in no way unjust in giving the keys to His kingdom to a people other than the Jews. They opposed and resisted Him and thus opened the door for the Gentiles to enter.

**What is your view of Israel?** This is an important question, for many believe that Israel is still the apple of God's eye. Then there are others that believe the glory of God in the earth today is the Church of His Son, Jesus, and not those who refused God's righteous advances that would have them repent and turn to God through faith in Christ. **What is your position? Do you have one? Do you care? Why is this important?**

## Day Two

42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: " 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? 43 "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. 44 He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed." 45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them. 46 They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

v. 42 – Jesus quoted them Psalm 118 and identified Himself to be the capstone that the builders rejected. The definition of a capstone is “the high point or crowning achievement.” Jesus spoke this truth indirectly as He did so often, sort of like a mini-parable, so that those who wanted to see would see but those who refused to see would not. You may want to read Psalm 118 at this point and see the context for this quote that Jesus used, but Jesus was indeed declaring that He was the “crowning achievement” or pinnacle of the Law. Since He was, then He could do what He did by the authority of His superior position. In other words, Jesus was telling them that He was (and is) God!

v. 43 – Since Jesus is King of the Kingdom, He announced that the Kingdom was being taken from the Jews and given to a people who would do something with it according to God’s intent! You cannot bestow or take away a Kingdom that you don’t own, so Jesus is indirectly declaring Himself to be the King. This did not mean that Jews could not be part of God’s Kingdom. It simply meant that they would have to acknowledge Jesus as King to do so. Since they were not willing to do so at this point, then they would be excluded. We know that many did declare that Jesus was King since we see in Acts that many became followers of the Way.

So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith (Acts 6:1-7).

v. 44 – **What is the stone that Jesus referred to here? Would this not be the capstone that Jesus mentioned earlier, which was a reference to Jesus Himself?** This stone is a source of “breaking” in a spiritual sense. Those who fall on the stone would be broken to pieces, but those upon which the stone would fall would be crushed. It seems that it is better to be broken in pieces in this context, which is perhaps a reference to those who throw themselves on this stone, asking for mercy. Yet those who do not throw themselves on the stone but have the stone fall on them are crushed, which is a prediction of what would eventually happen to the Jewish system that stood in opposition to Jesus.

v. 45 – The chief priests and Pharisees knew that Jesus was talking about them. It is interesting that some modern commentators don’t know what Jesus was saying, even though they have the historical interpretation. They cast doubts on what Jesus said and what it meant, not just here but in many other instances. Yet the Jews knew *exactly* what Jesus meant here, even though He spoke to them in parables. They did not question

whether or not Jesus had the authority to say such things – they assumed He did not. So that is why they wanted to arrest Him.

v. 46 – Once again we see a dynamic that I have drawn attention to throughout this study and that is that the people were more spiritually in tune than the leaders. The people knew that Jesus was at least a prophet, while the leaders wanted to arrest and kill Him, regardless of His status. Don't automatically believe that your leaders are more spiritual or intelligent than you. If you are a leader, don't assume that your office or position insures that you are correct all of the time.

### Day Three

22:1 Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: 2 "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. 3 He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. 4 "Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.' 5 "But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. 6 The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. 7 The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. 8 "Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. 9 Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' 10 So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. 11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 12 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless. 13 "Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 "For many are invited, but few are chosen."

vs. 1-14 – The references in this parable are fairly obvious, based on the context of the discussion that Jesus just had with the leaders and Pharisees. It was clear to them that Jesus was addressing the story to them; here He continued to show that Israel was in trouble, past the point of no return where God was concerned. God was expanding the pool of who could be considered to be part of His people, which of course related to sinners in general and Gentiles specifically.

The parable concludes with the statement: **Many are invited, but few are chosen.** **What exactly does this mean?** It means that the gospel of the Kingdom has been preached far and wide, but not everyone who hears is chosen to respond. There is an element of God's grace in every invitation and acceptance of the wedding feast. I love how it is described in Acts

On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city

of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us" (Acts 16:13-15)/

Yet God holds every person accountable for his or her refusal to wear the proper wedding garments, so to speak. God's mercy and grace are evident throughout this parable and no man can blame God for his or her condition. I think it is described best in Exodus: first, Pharaoh hardened his heart and at some point, after repeated refusals to repent, God hardened it.

But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said (Exodus 8:15).

But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said to Moses (Exodus 9:12).

**Doe this seem harsh to you? Are you thankful for God's grace that saved you or do you think you had something to do with it?**

#### Day Four

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 you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are. 17 Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes 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 portrait is this? And whose inscription?" 21 "Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "Give 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.

v. 15 – The Pharisees were not done yet, not content for Jesus to have the last word. Since they could not refute what Jesus had to say about heavenly things, they tried to trap Him concerning an earthly thing. It is not a good thing to debate God; He will always win, for He is smarter, wiser and more clever.

vs. 16&17 – The Jews tried to flatter Jesus to catch Him off guard. What they said to flatter Him, however, was exactly correct! He *did* teach in accordance with the truth and was impartial in His judgments and teaching. Jesus did not pay attention to who people were or what rank they had. **Do you?**

My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing

fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? (James 2:1-4).

vs. 18-21 – Jesus knew their intent and dishonesty, so He simply asked for a coin and then asked them a question. Jesus' questioners responded that Caesar's picture was on the coin. Jesus then gave His famous and oft-quoted response, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." What a simple but brilliant response! There is an aspect of this that should be present in our responses. I feel at times like I have to answer someone with everything I know about the topic of the question. I think that comes from my insecurity. Jesus, having no such problem, could answer simply and effectively. That makes me want to become a better listener and responder.

The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil. (Proverbs 15:28).

When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise (Proverbs 10:19 NAS)

Also, Jesus seemed to communicate that there is a civil sphere that is ordained by God. That civil sphere has the right to collect taxes and maintain justice in civil society, regardless of their relationship to God or His people. Paul picked up on this theme when he wrote

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves (Romans 13:1-2).

### Day Five

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 have children 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.

v. 23 – Once again, I marvel at how accessible Jesus was. His disciples and opponents could question Him and He answered them. **How accessible are you as a leader? Parent? Friend? Mentor?** The Pharisees had no success in stumping Jesus, so then it was the Sadducees' turn.

vs. 24-28 – Religious people love to raise hypothetical questions. Here the Sadducees weren't really interested in the answer; they wanted to establish the correctness of their pet doctrine – that there was no resurrection. **Did the Sadducees walk away from this encounter and reconsider their opposition to the resurrection doctrine?** They did not! When they could not get Jesus to agree with their position, they dismissed what He said. **How flexible are you when it comes to your own pet doctrines and opinions? Are you willing to change?**

v. 29 – Wow! Jesus told them without hesitation that they were in error because they did not know either the Bible or God's power! These were learned men who had studied all their lives and had reached the pinnacle of religious, Jewish success. Yet Jesus declared them to be wrong, ignorant of the Scriptures.

v. 30 – Jesus simply acknowledged that there is to be a resurrection. And life as we know it will cease to be, for those who are raised to life in God will be like the angels. Notice the authority with which Jesus answered. This wasn't a prophet talking; this was God talking. He knew things that no man could know or talk about, no matter how much revelation he had. Jesus talked about heaven because He was a resident of heaven.

vs. 31-32 – Jesus used the Old Testament to bolster His claim, for God is called the God of Abraham. That name was not a memorial to Abraham's memory, but the notice of a living relationship between God and Abraham. Abraham was alive and God was, too. That made Him the God of Abraham and his descendants. So Jesus authoritatively spoke about heaven and He authoritatively spoke about the Scriptures. He was telling the Sadducees what He had told the Pharisees, that He was God!

**How effectively do you understand and use the Old Testament in your teaching and outreach? Do you realize that Jesus' followers proved every claim they made about Jesus from the Old Testament? How much time do you spend reading or studying the Old Testament?**

**Also, do you realize how many Old Testament quotes are in the New Testament?** It makes for interesting study to go back to some of those passages from the Old in the New to see their context and to try and understand why the New Testament writer chose those passages from the Old to make his teaching point. I am currently doing such a study and it is a worthwhile effort.

v. 33 – The crowds were astonished because of Jesus' command of the Scriptures and their application to real-life doctrine and issues. I would propose that people *should* be astonished when we handle the Word as well, not because of our inherent goodness or

intelligence but because the same Spirit of Jesus lives inside you and me. As stated previously, my goal is the same effect as Jesus had when He spoke:

The large crowd listened to him with delight (Mark 12:37).

### Day Six

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 neighbor as yourself.' 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

v. 34 – It was as if Jesus was playing ping pong with the leaders – back and forth, back and forth, first one opponent, then the other, first the Pharisees, then the Sadducees and then the Pharisees again. Yet Jesus was up to the task, always impartial, never vindictive, but always honest. **How are you with your opponents? Are you as consistent and firm, yet gracious?**

v. 35 – This time the Pharisees put forth a lawyer, one who had spent his life studying the law. Not having learned their lesson earlier with the question about Caesar, the Pharisees sought to test Jesus once again by asking Him a difficult question. This question, however, was and is an important one and we can see God's providential hand in both the Pharisees asking it and Matthew including it. What's more, it would have been of supreme interest to every Jewish reader to whom Matthew was writing. **The question: what is the greatest commandment in the Law?**

vs. 36-38 – Without hesitation, Jesus answered that it was to love the Lord your God with all your being. The whole Old Testament and all its requirements and regulations can be summed up in one short sentence, and this represents God's summary. The Old Testament can seem so burdensome and complicated, yet with one statement Jesus streamlined and simplified it all. How easy and focused that is! Wow! Even the youngest child or the least intelligent adult can understand that.

I have made God so complicated at times, yet Jesus makes it simple. What's more, we have no reason to believe that this commandment changed in the New Testament. God was and is to be our top priority in all that we do. I have a body of teaching on purpose and I have written extensively on the subject. Yet I could summarize it all in one or two sentences: "You have a purpose, something only you can do or be. If God wants you to accomplish your purpose – and He does – then He must reveal what that purpose is. Yet God is a great communicator and, if your heart is set to hear it, God's is set to reveal it."

**What is the summary of what you stand for, teach or believe?**

v. 39 – Jesus then added that the second most important commandment is to love your neighbor. Our service to mankind must never, ever replace our love for God as the number one emphasis in our lives, no matter how urgent the needs of the people we serve. We serve people because we love God and that is, or should be, our main motivation. Yet Jesus said the second commandment was similar or like the first. We express our love for God when we love and serve others.

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another (1 John 4:9-11).

**How are you expressing your love for mankind as an indication of your love for God?**

### Day Seven

41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, 42 "What do you think about the Christ? 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.

vs. 41&42 – Once Jesus answered their question, He asked one of His own about whose Son the Christ is. The Pharisees answered correctly that He was to be a son of David. These men were steeped in the study of the Scriptures so they would eagerly enter into the debate Jesus had instigated. They were soon to find out, however, that they had met more than their match.

vs. 43-45 – Since the Pharisees had assumed that the Messiah was going to be a descendant like all other sons of David, they were not prepared to answer how David could have called one of his sons yet to be born “Lord.” Jesus directed their attention to Psalm 110, where God spoke to “my” or David’s Lord, who was one of David’s sons.

Of course, we see that Jesus was using this psalm to indicate that David’s Son, the Messiah, was already in existence prior to the birth of any of David’s sons. In other words, Psalm 110 is a psalm about Jesus. The Son of David who was to be the Messiah was not a natural son like the other descendants of David, but rather the Son of God, born of Mary from David’s lineage, but a divine Messiah. This was not what the Pharisees were looking for, therefore it was something they could not see or comprehend.

**What are your assumptions that prevent you from seeing something that God is saying or doing? What are your biblical assumptions that may be keeping you from understanding something from God’s word that you have been missing? The challenge with both those questions is that they are impossible to answer without God’s**

help, without Him showing you your blind spots. **So are you ready to pray and ask God to reveal your blind spots so you can see accurately?**

v. 36 – The Pharisees finally learned their lesson and did not ask Jesus any more questions. The problem was, however, that they had not repented and, instead of listening to what Jesus had to say, simply decided and determined that He must die. That is not a good way to deal with one's opponents, but the Pharisees were zealous for their way of life and killing this "heretic" Jesus was the only option that remained, since He could not be publicly refuted.

Jesus gave us clear directions on how to deal with our enemies. **How are you doing toward them personally? You don't have any? Then what are you doing that has not caused someone to question what you do?**

"Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way. "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." (Luke 6:26-27).