



THE
KINGDOM
IS HERE

matthew

sermon series

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THE DETERMINED MISSIONAL KING: MATTHEW 22:15-46

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For the last two weeks, Matthew has described to us in detail how the king is here, but the religious elite were not ready for him. Palm Sunday showed us that the king is here. He rode in on a young donkey and the people shouted, “Hosanna, to the Son of David.” Yet, the cleansing of the temple, the cursed fig tree, and the dishonest question about authority proved that the people were not ready. Sadly, they were not ready because they loved their power and their position more than the Messiah, and tragically, this reality means something terrible in the end for them. We see again in today’s text that the people are not ready for the Messiah: they seek to entangle him with their words.

The structure of Matthew again provides us with valuable insight to its meaning. In Matthew 21, Jesus silenced the religious elite with a question of John’s baptism (21:23-27). Now in Matthew 22, various groups within Judaism come to question Jesus with hard theological questions, yet Jesus is not silenced. He passes these texts extraordinarily (22:15-40). The section ends again with the religious elite silenced (22:41-46). The silenced religious elite are like bookends framing Jesus’ glorious parables and answers to their questions. This structure emphasizes an important truth about those who reject Jesus: they have no excuse.

So let's review what Matthew has taught us about Holy Week. 1) the King is here; 2) the religious elite are not ready; 3) the religious elite are not ready because they love their position and power more than the Messiah; 4) the religious elite will experience a horrific end, and 5) the religious elite have no excuse for rejecting the Messiah.

My hope today is that this passage would encourage us to live missionally for the glory of Jesus and not to get sidetracked with the many frightening and threatening realities of our day.

Let's now investigate this idea together.

Jewish Tests: Matthew 22:15-40

This text is divided into two sections. The first section concerns a series of three Jewish tests that aim to trap Jesus with his words (22:15).

The disciples of the Pharisees and the Herodians are the first to test Jesus, and the test is about taxes (Matthew 22:15-22). Currently, Israel was subject to the Roman government and there had been a history of controversy surrounding this topic. That should be no surprise to us since taxes are always a point of controversy.

However, we should be aware that in Jesus' context, some people made this topic of "taxes" into a religious issue. In other words, some argued that paying taxes was unfaithful religiously since the Lord ruled Israel, no one else. To pay taxes to Rome was to pledge allegiance to a king besides the Lord. Truly, this was not an easy question.

More than this being a difficult question, it was a trap. In verse 15, we learn that they ask it to entangle Jesus in his words, and in verse

18, Jesus rightly identifies their motive: evil. This question even reveals their hypocrisy since they approach Jesus with the appearance of genuineness. They complement Jesus and stress his pursuit of truth all the while pursuing a dishonest aim. Think about it: some people of this time genuinely wondered if they should pay taxes. Some wondered if they were in sin for doing so, and the religious elite use it as a pretext for self-advancement: to consolidate their power by silencing Jesus. The establishment are hypocrites (18).

Let's notice several things about Jesus and his reply. First, let's marvel over who Jesus is. The people have slandered him, made fun of him, tried to stone him, and now are committed to killing him, and Jesus knows all of this. Still, notice how Jesus doesn't reply. He doesn't reply out of fear or anger. Rather, he sticks to the mission. At this moment of potential crisis, Jesus is not threatened by their plans to kill him. Rather, the mission is prioritized.

Second, notice how simple Jesus' reply is. He asks whose inscription is on the coin (20-21). They answer correctly (20-21), and then he gives his judgment. Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's (21).

Third, Jesus' reply is marvelous (22). In verse 22, the people hear it and marvel. Church family, Jesus does not see the Jewish leaders as threats. Still, in all their questions, he is not sidetracked. Jesus sticks to the mission and the people marvel.

Next to test Jesus are the Sadducees who do not believe in the resurrection (23-33). This question is dishonest too and several details illustrate this point. First, Matthew tells us that this group of

people did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. This is significant because they ask a question about the resurrection. Second, like taxes, the issue of the resurrection was difficult. Although the Sadducees rejected this idea, the Pharisees believed it. Thus, the Sadducees hope that in asking this question, Jesus would be trapped and alienated from a portion of Judaism.

Now, this question may seem strange to us so let's understand its background. The background here is the institution of Levirate marriage: the practice of a younger brother marrying the wife of an older brother if they did not have children. This practice was important because it ensured that the deceased brother's memory would continue. In this marriage, the first child would take the place of the deceased brother and receive the inheritance of the older brother. In this way, the legacy of the deceased would live on. Thus, a wife being married to seven brothers was not an impossible reality in ancient Israel. This practice, though, in the Sadducees minds becomes complicated in light of the resurrection as they make clear: whose wife will she be (22:28).

Jesus' response focuses on two details: the Scripture (29, 32) and the power of God (29). First, the Sadducees failed to consider the power of God (29). The life to come is not just a mirror of this life as the Sadducees assume. Rather, it is of a different quality entirely. Jesus describes our life to come as similar to the angels (30), not that we become angelic. We are still human. Yet, we become like the angels because we no longer marry. Now for most of us, this makes us sad. We have rightly experienced glorious marriages and are saddened by the thought that this relationship does not transfer into eternity. I understand this thought, but this thought is mistaken because it

fails to consider the power of God. In other words, Jesus explains that the glory of eternity eclipses the glory of marriage. In other words, the best relationship in this world that produces the glory of children and is marked by profound intimacy cannot compare to the glories of the age to come. When we consider eternity, we must consider the power of God: he has the power to eclipse the glory of marriage for eternity.

Second, they fail to consider the Scriptures. In verse 31, Jesus bluntly demonstrates the truthfulness of the resurrection since God reveals himself in the present tense as “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” not I was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (See Exodus 3:6; Matthew 22:32). The crowds are rightly astonished.

The final group of Judaism to test Jesus is a lawyer: an interpreter of the law (34-39). Like the previous two questions, this question is likewise difficult and a trap. Matthew tells us that he asks it to “test” Jesus (35).

Moreover, the fact that there were hundreds of laws in the OT made it difficult. Jesus’ response focuses on the Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. Deuteronomy 6:5 is a commandment to love God completely, and the placement of this chapter in Deuteronomy is significant. The structure of Deuteronomy is worth noting here. Deuteronomy is structured as a covenant. A covenant is an elected relationship based on love and loyalty sworn under an oath before witnesses. In the ancient Near East, kings would enter covenants with one another. Basically, a powerful king would promise to protect a weaker king. At the beginning of these covenants, the powerful king would review their history together, and then they would outline stipulations of this relationship. Deuteronomy is structured as a covenant and at the center of this covenant is Deuteronomy 6. In other

words, Moses reviews God's history with Israel in Deuteronomy 1-4; then the 10 commandments are listed in 5, and then the command to love God completely summarizes what came before and foreshadows what's to come. Deuteronomy 6:6, then, serves as the key to Deuteronomy. We could put it this way: our covenant obligation to God is to love him. Jesus knows all this and answered correctly.

Jesus also cites Leviticus 19:18: we shall love our neighbors as ourselves. This is significant because it demonstrates that religious faithfulness is not confined to one's relationship to God but rather affects our relationship to one another. The ten commandments themselves demonstrate this point. The first four commandments describe how we are to relate to God: with faithful loyalty. The last six commandments describe how we are to relate to one another: we are to treat each other in human ways. Jesus brings these two ideas together – our obligation to God and to one another. We are to love God completely and others as ourselves (for more details about Deuteronomy 6:5, the 10 commandments, and the nature of covenants, see the book titled Kingdom through Covenant by Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum).

Jesus' Question: Matthew 22:41-46

Three groups of people have approached Jesus to test him, and Jesus has responded marvelously. Now, it is Jesus' turn. He asks what appears to be a very simple question: whose son is the Christ (42)? This question appears simple because the current of OT theology rushes onto a specific answer: he is the son of David. 2 Samuel 7 records for us God's covenant with David where God promises to give David an eternal dynasty, and Psalm 89 describes how God will give an eternal throne to one of David's sons. Several passages in the prophets speak of an anointed son of David who'll save God's people from their

enemies (see Jeremiah 23 for example). For the Pharisees, this is an easy question: a softball that they feel they've hit out of the park. Yet, they are soon silenced by Jesus.

Jesus asks again a simple question: if the Christ is David's son why does David call him Lord: a reference to Psalm 110:1. The Pharisees cannot answer him since they conceive of the Messiah as merely a repeat of David. They hope for a son who'll be a redo of David. He will be a man who will reestablish Israel politically and ensure her position and power in the world. Notice, how they have cast the Messiah in their image (they love power and position). They are wrong, deadly wrong. The Messiah is the Son of David, surely, but Jesus indicates that their conception of the Son of David is mistaken. He is not merely David's son, a repeat of the former David to bring about a kingdom like the former one. The Messiah is God's son, God himself, who'll bring about a kingdom that the former merely pictured as a shadow. The religious elite are humiliated and silenced.

Application

Church family, the topic of silenced opposition bookends this section. In between them, we have a missional Messiah far from silenced. He speaks glorious parables and offers theological replies that astonish the crowds. Here are two ways that I hope this passage transforms us.

First, perhaps you are not a Christian. Would you come to Jesus, today? You have no excuse for rejecting Jesus. Surely, you think you have an excuse or many excuses. The Jews thought that they had excuses, but Jesus silenced them. There will come a day when your excuses will likewise be silenced by the brilliance of our Messiah. Do not wait for that day but come to him today. How do you come to him? Romans 10:9 tells us how. It involves confessing Jesus as Lord and believing that the Father raised him from the dead. Who is your Lord

and master? Would you commit to following Jesus today? Do you believe that he rose again from the dead? If so, then you are saved, and if you have recently gotten saved, would you please let us know so that we can disciple and care for you.

Second, church family, notice how Jesus is not threatened by the Jewish groups even though they are threatening him. They are planning to kill him now and will soon follow through on this evil plan. Yet, Jesus does not get sidetracked. Fear does not overwhelm. Fear sometimes leads to cowardice or outrage: Jesus does neither. Instead, Jesus stays focused. He focuses on the mission: the glory of God displayed in saving his people from the curse. Therefore, church family, we will be tempted to get sidetracked this week. Perhaps something political will happen that we do not agree with or are deeply afraid of. Perhaps something will happen relationally that will frighten us to the core. Regardless of what happens this week, church family, let's follow our missional Messiah in gospel living. Here are three ways to do that.

1. Pray this week for the fall festival that many people would come, hear the gospel, and believe in Jesus.
2. Next, invite someone to the fall festival.
3. Finally, share the gospel with them or someone you see here.

Let's stay focused on the mission, church family.

Prayer

God help us to live missional lives for your glory, and not to get sidetracked by the threats and frightening realities of this world. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.

