



## Question and Answer

*Series: Matthew: The King and His Kingdom*

Matthew 22:15-46

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Beloved, I do not want to spend much time on an introduction this morning because I really want for us to get right into the text. Remember that we are in the last week of Jesus' earthly life, the last week of His preaching and teaching. Over the last few sermons, as we have looked at the parables that Jesus spoke to the chief priests, the elders and the Pharisees – parables specifically about them, we have seen Jesus powerfully expose the emptiness of their religious claims. He exposes the worthlessness of their perverted form of Judaism, the deadliness of spiritual hypocrisy, the wickedness of empty and vain professions of faith, the lie of fruitless "faith", the insanity of claiming to be the people of God while rejecting the Son as the cornerstone, and their obstinacy of their hard hearts. In doing all of this, Jesus had, for anyone who had eyes to see, completely ripped back the curtain on these religious leaders – kind of like in the Wizard of Oz – and revealed the rotting reality behind the reputation.

That is what sets the scene for what we are going to look at today, a series of confrontations initiated by Christ's opponents with only one objective in mind -- to trap Jesus, to discredit Him and bring reproach upon His ministry and His authority. These confrontations will set the stage for some of the most memorable moments in Christ's ministry as He accurately and keenly moves past the presenting questions to the defective issues of His opponent's hearts. The reason that we are doing all of these texts together is because they are inextricably intertwined. We need to see all of these confrontations in their succession, building to Christ's unanswerable question – the question that is the key to everything else. So start with me in the first confrontation with the Pharisees and the Herodians:

The Pharisees and Herodians – Render to God the Things That Are God's (v.15-22) Pick it up in verse 15: "Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words." (Matthew 22:15, ESV) Having just heard powerful truth expounded by Jesus, truth that left them guilty before God, needing to cry out to God for mercy, the Pharisees, rather than humbling

themselves and repenting of their sins, instead take council together to determine how they might discredit Jesus and undermine His authority and the weightiness of His words. So they come up with a plan and that plan begins with a partnership with a group that would normally be detestable to them – the Herodians.

Normally the Pharisees would have had nothing to do with the Herodians. Here's why. The Pharisees were nationalists and they were religious separatists. They believed strongly in the sovereignty of Israel. They chafed at the Roman occupation and resisted strongly any kind of association with what they considered to be Godless pagans. The Herodians, on the other hand, embraced the Roman rule and profited greatly from it. They were called Herodians because they supported the rule of King Herod and Herod was a Roman lackey, so they were supporters of Rome as well.

The Pharisees and the Herodians had an axe to grind with one another, but they had an even greater axe to grind with Christ. The Pharisees despised Jesus because He was everything they were not and He was a grave threat to their power and reputation. The Herodians hated Jesus because He was bad for business, bad for progress under Roman rule. So they conspire together to entangle Jesus in his words. Verse 16: "And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances." (Matthew 22:16, ESV)

What a brood of insincere snakes these men are, false flattery dripping from their poisonous lips. They give to Jesus a glowing commendation. What faithful preacher of the Word of God would not rejoice to hear these words spoken in sincerity about them? What they say is true – He is true – a man of integrity; He teaches the way of God truthfully and accurately; He is not concerned with opinion and does not fear man in His preaching; and He does not judge by appearances – all that they say is true, but they do not believe it and they do not mean it. They are simply attempting to butter Jesus up, preparing to spring the trap that they believe will catch Him. And in verse 17, they take their best shot.

"Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" (Matthew 22:17, ESV) The question is about something called a "head tax" or a "poll tax". It was basically a tax

for being alive and living under Roman authority and benefiting from Roman rule. All males over 14 and females over 12 had to pay this "head tax" until they were 65 years old. The Pharisees despised the tax because it was a continual reminder of Roman occupation, but the Herodians were all for it because they were pro-Rome. So they want to know "Is it lawful, is it right before God, to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

They think that their question is so clever, so sly, that they have put Jesus on the horns of a dilemma that He cannot escape. If Jesus says "Don't pay it," then He is liable to arrest and if He tells them to "Pay it," he will immediately forfeit popular support. They think they've got Him. It wasn't the first or the last time that they would be wrong. Jesus calls them out and goes right to the heart of the issue.

"But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius." (Matthew 22:18–19, ESV) Seeing right through their subterfuge, Jesus calls them what they are – hypocrites. They came praising Him, but their heart was to trap them and Jesus knows it and says so in front of everyone. He completely takes charge of the situation and asks for a denarius.

"And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."" (Matthew 22:20–21, ESV) Some people take this text and turn it into a great big treatise on God and government – but that is not what this is. That misses the heart of what Jesus is saying. In this response to the Pharisees' and Herodians' question, Jesus cuts through their trivial nonsense and says in effect – "Whose coin is this? It has the likeness and inscription of Caesar, so give him back what is his. It belongs to him. You owe it to him. But here is the greater issue, the one that you need to be concerned about – that you give to God what belongs to God. God owns you, not a coin, you. You owe God. The tax is not the issue, you are. You refuse to give to God what belongs to Him"

It's true. The Pharisees and Herodians, in truth, had given nothing to God that He desired. They did not give Him honor or glory, did not obey Him from the heart, did not reverence Him, did not worship Him in truth, did not bless Him with fruitful lives, did not honor His Son. Despite bearing the likeness and image of God, as all men do, they did not give anything to God

that He desired at all. Those words just hung in the air, an indictment of the corrupt and hypocritical hearts. Render to God the things that are God's. The Pharisees failed to see the real issue at hand. Matthew records their response saying: "When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away." (Matthew 22:22, ESV) They were surprised that Jesus had managed to find His way out of their trap but they didn't hear anything he said. The Pharisees turned back, it was now the Sadducees' turn.

The Sadducees – You Know Neither the Scriptures Nor the Power of God (v. 23-33) Starting in verse 23 we read: "The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question," (Matthew 22:23, ESV) Now that is a key point that you cannot miss. The Sadducees were the religious liberals of the day and they didn't believe in the resurrection nor did they believe in angels. They really didn't believe in anything. They were the elite and the enlightened. Spirituality was fun talk, Scripture and spiritual things just something to philosophize about, to banter about and pontificate upon. They were casual and careless regarding God's truth.

So they come to Jesus, fabricating a question that is completely foolish and intended to show how ludicrous they thought it was to believe in a literal resurrection. The story is ridiculous. They ask: "Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.' Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to his brother. So too the second and third, down to the seventh. After them all, the woman died. In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her." (Matthew 22:24–28, ESV) They were referring to levirate marriage in which a man would marry his brother's widow, if she were childless, and raise up children for him so that his line and name would not die out. But these guys are not asking in sincerity. They simply want to make Jesus look like a fool and tie him up in some hypothetical conundrum of their own making. They think they are so smart, that they can invent in their minds some impossible situation, some impossible difficulty that cannot be explained that will make all that Jesus taught and all that Scripture teaches to be invalid.

Now you know, sometimes we think that this is a new and modern occurrence, a result of post modernism and of living in a world that does not accept absolute truth, but it isn't. Hardened hearts, as far back as these Sadducees have often obsessed over hypothetical questions in order to avoid dealing with gospel realities that are staring them right in the face. They do it as a way to escape facing the inescapable claims of Christ. It is what skeptics, atheists, and false

prophets like Rob Bell and Brian MacLaren and men of their ilk do in order to escape gospel truth.

Jesus will not get sucked into this foolishness at all. He refuses to treat the Word of God like some kind of morsel to be twirled on the tongue, to reduce the Word of God to some philosophy debate. He pointed and bluntly diagnoses their hearts. "But Jesus answered them, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God." (Matthew 22:29, ESV) Literally, Jesus says to them, "You have deceived yourselves and wandered off the path of truth." The guys who thought themselves to be smart had made themselves foolish. They didn't know the Scriptures. They did not know the power of God. For all of their cleverness and imagined brilliance, they were fools. They failed to understand and believe and submit themselves to the truth of Scripture and the truth of Christ's preaching, not because it was not clear but because of their rebellious hearts and bias against God. That is the issue with everyone who rejects God's Word and particularly those who fancy themselves to be so brilliant. They may, like the Sadducees, like Rob Bell, use it to ask contemptuous questions or throw it around as if it is nothing more than some trivial and trifling thing to be quibbled over, but they will not submit to it because they have hardened and calloused hearts of unbelief. That was the case of the Sadducees.

Jesus says two things about them. Take first this thought -- they do not know or understand the power of God at all. To illustrate that Jesus says: "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven." (Matthew 22:30, ESV) The resurrection is gospel reality. Everyone will live forever in the joy of intimacy with God in heaven or in the torment of eternal wrath in the horror of Hell. That is a fact. These Sadducees were clueless. They had made themselves fools. They knew nothing of God's power to raise the dead and particularly to raise believers in such a way and to such a life that it far surpasses even the greatest joys on earth, even a Godly and satisfying marriage. In the future, marriage will be a thing of the past. The intimacy that one human being shares with one other person in marriage will be the perfect experience of every believer with one another in the joy and the love of heaven. Believers will be like angels, spiritual beings, and angels do not marry nor do they die. They are eternal children of God. Sickness, pain, and disease, will not be known. Old age, and death will have no place. Marriages, births, and a constant succession of children, will be no more needed because death will be no more. They who are once admitted into heaven shall dwell there forevermore. Moreover, the invisible, spiritual union of Christ and the church, of which marriage was to be a concrete example, will be fully realized in heaven. The picture

will be replaced by the greater reality. They did not know the power of God to raise the dead to life.

And they did not know or understand the Scriptures either. Jesus says: “And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.” (Matthew 22:31–32, ESV) Jesus quotes from the Pentateuch – the Sadducees considered themselves as masters of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible – and tells them simply that when God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush, He did not say: “I was the God of Abraham, and I was the God of Isaac, and I was the God of Jacob but those guys are dead now and I will be your God now until you die.” No, He was saying: “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – who though they are dead in the bodies are alive to God.” He did not tell Moses that he had been their God, but that he was then, at that moment, their God. But that could only be if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still living. The present tense is important. They would have to be living so that God could bring to fruition His promises to them which were not fulfilled during their lifetimes. Hebrews 11 tells us: “These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.” (Hebrews 11:13–16, ESV) The Sadducees did not know or understand the Scriptures, even the ones they claimed to know in and out, and they didn’t know the Scriptures because they had an unbelieving heart and a bias against God.

They did not know the power of God and they did not know the Word of God. Jesus deals pointedly with the Sadducees. “And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.” (Matthew 22:33, ESV) The entire crowd that heard the exchange was astonished, amazed by the way that Jesus handled the question, but again they missed the heart of His message. The Pharisees, seeing that the Sadducees have failed, decide to hold a conference to come up with yet another test for Jesus.

The Pharisees Again – Love God and Love Your Neighbor (v. 34-40) Picking up in verse 34 we read: “But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which is the

great commandment in the Law?"" (Matthew 22:34–36, ESV) What is the heart behind this test? I think the Pharisee's idea here is to draw Jesus onto a debate, to get him in a theological discussion, to get Him to argue His position or opinion and in so doing to reduce and lessen the worth of His proclamation and teaching from words of binding authority to just mere opinion. They wanted Jesus to get into a debate. But Jesus does not debate, He declares. In reality, they asked a question that was much more significant than they even knew. "What is the greatest commandment?"

Jesus' answer is powerful and unsettling. In His answer, He moves the dot from the arena of specific action to the arena of motive and heart. He moves it from the place of possible human achievement to the place of impossibility in human terms. "And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."" (Matthew 22:37–40, ESV)

What does loving God with all your heart, soul, and mind look like? It is not a commandment that compartmentalizes love for God into a few different categories. To express this command in this way is to speak of a comprehensive, all-encompassing, wide-ranging, far-reaching love. We are to love the Lord with all of our being, with everything in us, in every way possible. And, in concert with that love for God, we are to love our neighbor with a fullness of love that seeks his ultimate and spiritual good. It is love God completely and to love your neighbor genuinely in word and deed. All of the requirements of the Old and New Testament are summed up in this greatest commandment. If we loved God completely there would be no idolatry, we would keep His commands, we would honor and worship and glorify Him as Lord – all the things that the Pharisees, and every sinner, falls short in doing. If we loved people sacrificially there would be no need for the Law because we would never treat anyone in an unloving manner.

But we know, don't we, that nobody has ever loved God with all his being. No one has ever loved his neighbor as himself. Nobody can possibly merit eternal life. Christ's answer, once again, throws us back to grace. If we are to have any place in the Kingdom of God, it will be due to the unmerited grace of God. And it is that reality that leads to the most profound question that is asked in this entire question and answer session. It is the question that Jesus asks of the Pharisees.

Whose Son is the Christ? (v.41-46) Read with me in, starting in verse 41: “Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?”” (Matthew 22:41–42a, ESV) The answer to this question is the difference between life and death, heaven and hell, eternal life and eternal death, salvation and damnation. Whose Son is the Christ? The question was easy enough to answer, or so the Pharisees thought. “They said to him, “The son of David.”” (Matthew 22:42b, ESV) It was the right answer as far as it went. In terms of human genealogies it was the right answer. For hundreds of years, the chief priests, the scribes, the elders, the teachers, and the Pharisees taught the Israelites that the Messiah was to be an offspring of David. They knew from the Scriptures that He would be an exalted and glorious descendant of David. The answer was correct.

That is why the Pharisees were furious that Jesus would receive the praise of the people and of the children saying “Hosanna to the Son of David.” They were angry that the people who heralded His entrance into Jerusalem would call Him the “Son of David” and that Jesus would let them do it. He did not fit the mold. They thought that what they needed in a Messiah was a political deliverer, but what they needed was far more. It is true that the Christ would be the Son of David, but that answer was partial and inadequate. The title, “Son of David” did not come close to doing justice to the reality of who Jesus is. Rather than the title being too great for Jesus, as the Pharisees contended, it was far, far too limited. He is “Son of David” but He is far more. Jesus makes that clear by what He says next.

“He said to them, “How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, “ ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet” ’? If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?”” (Matthew 22:43–45, ESV)

Jesus quotes from the first verse of Psalm 110, a psalm written by David, a psalm that all of the Jewish leaders to whom Jesus was speaking would have recognized as referring to the Messiah. So here is the big question. If King David is here speaking of his promised Offspring—whom we all rightly know to be the Messiah—then how is it that he also, in prayer before Yahweh, calls his own Son Adonai – Lord or Master? How is it that, in the Spirit, David refers to his promised Son as his “Lord”?

Jesus' point is clear, isn't it? No father calls his son, "Lord." Sons are deferential to fathers. If David, then, called his physical descendant his "Lord," it could only be because the One to come would in some way be greater than David was. The only way that could happen is if the Messiah was more than a mere man. He would have to be divine Messiah; he would have to be God, the Son of God. And He is. What does it mean to sit at God's right hand? It is more than a place of honor; it is to share in His rule. It signified participation in His royal dignity and power, like a son ruling with his father. The Messiah is more than the Son of David, He is the Son of God and He rules as Lord over all.

Jesus is telling these men that their view of the identity of the Messiah is far less glorious, far less grand, far less splendid, far less exalted than He truly is. He is telling them exactly who He is. Jesus did not shy away from the title "Son of David" because He is that and so much more. He is the divine Son of the Living God and he is Lord over all. It does not matter if the Pharisees acknowledged that truth or not. Jesus is Lord and God has made Him such. You can fight that Lordship and be crushed and be put under His feet or you can submit to His Lordship in faith and joy.

The Pharisees did not see or understand this truth. They were not like Peter, who when Jesus asked Him, "Who do you say that I am?" responded with the great confession, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." And why? Because, unlike Peter, the Father who is in Heaven did not choose to reveal the truth to them. God did not choose to open their eyes and ears to the truth.

Oh beloved, you need to see this and understand how incredibly blessed by God you are if you are a saved man, a saved woman. None of the things that Jesus was saying to these men holds weight in the soul and makes sense to the heart unless you understand and embrace, with delight, who Jesus really is. The reason that we, who are believers, can embrace and receive and welcome the spiritual truths that Jesus declares here is because we know who He is in truth. The reason that Jesus' words ring in our hearts is because we know and treasure who He is. Because we know Christ as He is, all these truths that were lost on the Pharisees, the Herodians, the Sadducees, the chief priests, the elders – these we understand and embrace.

By God's grace, we who are believers have been granted by God to know Christ as He truly is – Son of David, Son of God, Savior, Redeemer, and Lord. We have been blessed beyond measure by our God. “For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:6, ESV) By His Spirit, God has shown in our hearts, in the hearts of redeemed sinners, giving us light to see Jesus as He is – the only hope for the sin-dead soul. This is why the Son of God took on flesh as the Son of David -- to live a perfect life, a life that upheld in every way the law of God and the glory of God, upholding God's glory in the sinner's place, to die the perfect death – He came to pay for the penalty of our sin in His body on the tree. He came to suffer, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. God was pleased to judge our sins on a holy and sinless substitute, the only substitute whose sacrifice and blood could pay the infinite cost of our offense against God's holiness, His own dear Son. He was pleased to give salvation to His people by regenerating our deadened hearts, to give us a mind to believe that Christ has paid the eternal penalty of the sins of everyone who will repent of their wickedness before God and will trust In Him as Savior alone. He has given to us a heart to long for redemption and a will to trust Christ, to have faith in Him as our Savior King.

We, of all people, are most blessed. By God's grace, we know what it means to belong to God, to be owned by God as His special possession, to render to Him the things that are His. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6: “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20, ESV) Or as Paul writes in Romans 12, after his long dissertation on the gospel: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” (Romans 12:1, ESV) Because of His mercy He has given to us, because of His steadfast love and grace He has poured out on us, we have been made to increasingly know and understand what it means to render God the glory He deserves – the honor He deserves as a Father, the reverence He deserves as a master, the sacrifice of praise of which He is worthy, our first love which He deserves, the personal holiness that pleases Him, the faithfulness to His kingdom purposes that His Lordship demands. That and more, we have been graced by God to both understand and be motivated and empowered by His Spirit to pursue. This is all of grace, do you see?

We are of all people most blessed because only by God's grace do we know who Christ is and what Christ has done, and so we look to a certain eternity in heaven, a real resurrection because our Lord has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of all who die in Him. We look, with hope, to the inheritance that is ours – a heaven of unimaginable joys, a life that will far

outstrip the greatest joys of this life, a life of perfect communion with God serving Him perfectly, unhesitatingly, unweariedly and gladly. We will be fully alive with a fullness of life like we cannot imagine, in the presence of God and we will ever delight in Him and in the Lamb, seeing and enjoying the fullness of what it means to be the blessed of God – I can scarcely conceive of it. “But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him” — these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:9–10, ESV) I may not be able to explain it fully but I believe it. I believe it because I believe God’s Word. What it says is true, binding, authoritative, unbending truth. I believe it because I have experienced the power of the resurrection in my life right now raising me from spiritual deadness and giving me a heart that loves Christ and desires to worship him, the work of the Spirit to sanctify me. All by His grace. We believe His Word and know His power.

And it is because of the grace of God to reveal to our hearts who Christ is and what Christ has done, to shine in our hearts the truth, that we live for a better and eternal day and not like so many who are living only for the day, only for the moment. It is that mentality, this living for the day, that explains so much of the sin, so much of the rebelliousness of the human heart, the overall shortsightedness and lack of restraint, the lack of understanding regarding the worth of things, of what matters most. Those who live without a real, solid belief in the resurrection – the reality of it – a very real resurrection to eternal suffering in hell or eternal joy in heaven, determined by your relationship to Jesus Christ, cannot possibly rightly measure anything in life. They do not live in light of the end. It explains so much about how ordinary people live every day in our world. They do not see the present in terms of an eternal future. They measure the present by the present only and that changes everything, distorts everything, corrupts everything. You cannot know the truth about today, about your life today, unless you connect today to tomorrow, the eternal future. By God’s grace we have been blessed to know this. It is such a great blessing of God to free us from the tyranny of this age and to live for something greater, something eternal.

We are blessed and we are loved by God, loved so much by God. “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:9–10, ESV) And it is only because He has loved us with an everlasting love, a steadfast, lavish, saving sacrificial love in Christ that we can begin to love Him as we are called to do. “So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him...We

love because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:16,19 ESV) It is because of God’s great love for us that has been revealed to us in Christ that the great commandment to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, and the second commandment, you shall love your neighbor as yourself are not a tremendous burden under which we are crushed, but an ideal for which we gladly strive by the Spirit of God dwelling within us.

We really do desire to fellowship with God and His people, love His Word, love to pray. We truly are content in Him, satisfied in His provision, loving what He loves and hating what He hates. We desire to do His will and with joy. We want to be loyal to Him, faithful, obedient, bringing Him pleasure and not grieving His Spirit. We want to give our supreme love to Him and never be found to be idolaters -- of people or of things. That is why loving God is described in terms of heart, soul, and mind – it is a total-person, all-consuming love that Jesus is talking about and we desire to have that.

And it is a love overflows to our neighbors, actively seeking to do them good, to express in tangible ways, real love and care for them physically and for their souls. Certainly we cannot love God perfectly or love our neighbor perfectly, if we could we would not need a Savior. No one has ever loved God or neighbor perfectly except Christ the Son and yet that is our desire as redeemed people. I like what John MacArthur has to say at this point: “The great Forgiver is also the great Enabler...” He is right. The same love and grace by which the penalty of our sins is fully paid is the very same grace and love by which the power of righteousness by the Spirit, and grace-empowered love for God can become a sincere, though imperfect while we are in these bodies of flesh, reality in our lives.

This is who we are, a blessed people, and the reason we are convicted when we are not living according to these words of Christ is because by God’s grace, we have come to know who Christ is and how we are blessed in Him and what he commands of us. So ask yourself – do these words of blessing describe you? Have you beheld Christ and believed in Christ as He is, as He truly is – Savior, Lord, King? Do you delight to belong to God and to serve Him and render to Him what is His? Do you live in light of eternity and not simply for the day? Do you believe the Word of God and desire to know it more; do you believe in the power of God? Do you know what it is have your life defined by love for God and love for your neighbor? This is who we are as the blessed people of God.

If this is not descriptive of you I am calling you today to come to Christ, to come to Him in faith, to flee to him in confession and repentance, to trust in Him and the power of His gospel to save and transform sinners – you. Do it because if these words do not describe you, it is because your religion is defective or your faith is weak. These are not just nice thoughts, idyllic little phrases to describe an imaginary life – this is what true blessedness, real life in Christ looks like.

When Jesus finished speaking, Matthew records the response: “And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.” (Matthew 22:46, ESV) The Pharisees and everyone else who heard Jesus speak were rendered speechless. They refused to see who He was. They refused to acknowledge His glory. They refused to love Him, to their everlasting destruction. As Paul writes: “If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come!” (1 Corinthians 16:22, ESV) And the only reason that we love Him is because God has been exceedingly gracious to us.

In all of the encounters that we have looked at over the last several weeks, this truth stands out: We need Christ. You need Him. You need to know who He is and you need Him above all else. You need Him to be your Savior and Lord. So Jesus stands before these Pharisees, He stands before us, and He asks the question: What do you think about the Christ? This is a question that cannot be ignored. This is not simply a question for debate or discussion. This is a question of the greatest practical and eternal significance. This is the pressing issue of life.

Jesus Christ is Christianity, the very essence, the very core of Christianity. Christianity cannot peacefully coexist with any other religion – whether one of the formal religions or the ones we invent with our sanitized, homogenized Jesus and user-friendly God. If Christ is true, there is only one Savior, one Lord, one faith, one fellowship of the saints, one true Book, one narrow path that leads to heaven. Jesus Christ...alone. What do you think about the Christ?

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