

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

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The Gospel of Matthew

Lessons in Bible Study – Taught by Christ Himself

February 2, 2020

Sermon Text: Matthew 22:15-46

Scripture Reading: Exodus 3

We looked at a large section of Scripture last time and in our overview we considered the question “Who is man to question the Lord?” You remember that asking questions of God is certainly no sin in itself and in fact asking questions is how we gain knowledge about anything, including about what God has revealed to us in His Word. These questions put to Jesus by His enemies were not sinful because of the question, but because of the motive which produced them. And we saw that asking questions of God with the motive of accusing or arrogantly thinking they will stump

Him is a very evil sin and a mark of a hardened, unbelieving heart.

And we said that wisdom – answers to our questions – begin with the fear of the Lord. There has to be a beginning point at which we cease asking questions and we simply exercise faith in the universal revelation of Himself that God has given to everyone:

Heb 11:3 By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

Heb 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

The first chapter of Romans is a central statement of these things. We also see there the response of man in his sin, left to himself, to be one of *suppression of the truth he knows to be true about God*. The result of such

willful blindness is that God then hands the wicked over to their sins, departing from them so that their blindness and unbelief reaches the level of insanity:

Rom 1:32 Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

But before we leave chapter 22, we need to move in for a closer look at several points and as always there will still be many things here that we will leave untouched, that being the nature of Scripture and its nuggets of truth that require diligent mining.

Let's begin with this matter of flattering lips:

Mat 22:15-17 Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. (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. (17) Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"

We know that the motive of these questioners was evil. That is clear.

They are wicked. Yet they open their words with what parades as a compliment. But it is a lie because of the deceitful motive.

Now notice the nature of this flattery. *It is true.*

- You are true
- You teach the way of God truthfully
- You do not care about anyone's opinion
- You are not swayed by appearances

These things are true and yet flatterers *are liars*. Why? Because they do not believe any of these things. They hate the one they are flattering. *Flattery is always a setup, a scheme to accuse and destroy and use.* And the Bible has much to say about this tactic of evil-

Gal 4:17 They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them.

Psa 5:9 For there is no truth in their mouth; their inmost self is destruction; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue.

Psa 5:9 For there is no truth in their mouth; their inmost self is destruction; their throat is an open grave; they

flatter with their tongue.

There are many more. Notice “there is no truth in their mouth” and “their inmost self is destruction.” The flatterer is a liar and his intent is to destroy.

This by the way is a very common tactic used by wicked abusers who are working to deceive their chosen target. It is sometimes called “love-bombing” and is designed to gain the trust of the unsuspecting.

Beware then of the flatterer. Inordinate, inappropriate praise. I have learned these things the hard way and many of you have as well. The flatterer is very typically found in local churches and his or her goal is to gain power and control for their own self-glory. You see it also in large assemblies of local churches such as at annual denominational meetings where praise is heaped upon some prominent person or by some prominent person. The think should be repulsive to us because it is repulsive to God.

Pro 26:28 A lying tongue hates its victims, and a flattering mouth works ruin.

And let me add one more point. If you crave to be flattered you are very naïve if not an outright fool. Why? Because

flattery is lying. The person who craves to be flattered is actually craving to be told lies about themselves. It is a formula for disaster and for a very unhappy life.

The God Who is I AM

Let’s move on then for another look at verses 31-32:

Mat 22:29-32 But Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. (30) For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. (31) And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: (32) ‘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.”

Here is an example of how the Bible is a mine of hidden gems and therefore requires diligent work on our part to study it properly. These people fancied themselves experts on Scripture and yet Jesus showed them something they had been blind to.

Not only had these Sadducees been foolish in regard to the nature of the resurrection and the new heavens and earth, but their denial of the

resurrection is proven wrong by Scripture. Look at this statement by God to Moses way back in burning bush days:

Exo 3:6 And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Now, at first glance this sounds like an introductory phrase, something to read but then to move on from for the real meat of what God would say. But *this is the very verse that Jesus cites to the Sadducees to show them an incredible truth that they were blind to.*

In fact, they should have seen it because just a short way further down in the chapter you have this:

Exo 3:14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

God is the eternal, self-existent One. I AM. And He used this present tense to declare that He IS (not WAS) the God of the patriarchs. *He IS not the God of the dead but of the living.* Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob *are living!* And Jesus made that statement 2,000 years AFTER they lived on this earth.

Also, notice something else here:

(31) And as for the resurrection of the dead, **have you not read what was said to you by God:** (32) '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."

Do you see it? This relates directly to what we have been learning in the Sunday School class about *hearing* God in the Word. Jesus is talking to these Sadducees some 1400 years after Moses' day and He quotes what God said to Moses, and Jesus introduces those words with *have you not read what was said TO YOU BY GOD?* When you read the Bible, *God is speaking to YOU.* It is the Word of God, it is God speaking, and it is God speaking to you. Think about that very carefully.

This is what we mean when we say that the Bible is a mine of gems of truth and we must work hard at mining them, doing so of course with reliance upon God's Spirit, who is the Spirit of Truth, to help us see them.

The Greatest of the Commandments

Next, let's look at something that really is the ABC of Christianity and yet which most local churches and pastors are turning a blind eye to:

Mat 22:34-40 But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. (35) And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. (36) “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” (37) 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. (38) This is the great and first commandment. (39) And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. (40) On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

This subject is so fundamental and so huge that it is difficult to know where to begin when discussing it.

Here we have still another wicked man asking a good question but with a completely evil motive...”a question to test him.” We are left wondering just what this man’s own answer would have been? Jesus goes right to the heart of it and quotes from this:

Deu 6:1-15 “Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, (2) that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son,

by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. (3) Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. (4) “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. (5) You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (6) And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. (7) You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. (8) You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. (9) You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (10) “And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, (11) and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full, (12) then take care lest you forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt,

out of the house of slavery. (13) It is the LORD your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear. (14) You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you— (15) for the LORD your God in your midst is a jealous God—lest the anger of the LORD your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth.

And then Jesus turns to a second commandment which *is as great as the first one!*

(38) This is the great and first commandment. (39) And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

See it? Jesus is not saying that the second is of *secondary importance* in relation to the first. No. He says *there is a second commandment that is LIKE the first.*

At the core of the Law, just as it is at the core and center of the gospel, is this duty of man: to love God and to love his neighbor. Numbers of Jesus' parables go right at these things – think of the Good Samaritan for instance.

When Jesus says: “On these two commandments depend all the Law

and the Prophets” He is saying that without this love for God and love for one's neighbor, all other law-keeping is useless. Because true obedience to God's Law is actually obedience to these two commandments. God's Law in other words is an expression of God's own character and being. God is Love. Not the mushy superficial stuff that so often parades as love, but the real thing.

When, for instance, the civil authorities wield the sword and punish or even execute the wicked, this is an expression of God's love. To turn a blind eye to evil, to fail to bring about justice for the oppressed, is not God's love and yet it is quite prevalent in churches today.

Now, apart from Christ and apart from being born again by faith alone in Christ alone, no one is going to love God or love his neighbor. Because keeping the Law of God is impossible for man in his sin. We must be born again. Given new hearts and minds. Made new creations. *And when we are born again, we ARE new creations, we HAVE new hearts and minds, we ARE indwelt and led by the Spirit and therefore we love God and we love our neighbor. We fulfill the Law.* All because of Christ and His redemption of us.

Let me say this again and again and again. I have lived all of my life being a member of local churches. I have been a pastor of local churches now for 37 years. So I think I can speak with some authority as to my observations of the local church. Here is one:

The large majority (most) of local churches are not characterized by this love of God and neighbor that the Bible speaks of. They are in fact characterized by a lack of these very things. Why? Because they are filled with people who are not born again.

1Jn 2:9-11 Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. (10) Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. (11) But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

1Jn 3:14-15 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. (15) Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

David's Greater Son

Finally, let Jesus show us one more gem He pulls from Scripture which He used to silence his enemies:

Mat 22:41-46 Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, (42) saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." (43) He said to them, "How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, (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 is he his son?" (46) And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

This gem comes from Psalm 110. Verse 44 is a quote from that Psalm. These Jews knew full well that Psalm 110 was a messianic Psalm – that is, David is speaking of the Messiah.

Now, whatever these people thought about the Messiah, their thinking was wrong. They were right in that they confessed He would be the son of king David, but what they were blind to because of their unbelief was the fact that the Messiah was far more than the

son of David. He was *the Son of God*, much more than just a descendant of David. Because David *called Him Lord!*

“The Lord [Yahweh] said to my [David’s] Lord [the Messiah], “Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet””

The answer of course is that the Messiah is Jesus, Son of David AND Son of God. He is King of kings. He is David’s Lord and God. That is why David called Him Lord.

I hope you can see then from these few examples how we must never say that “we know the Bible.” It is inexhaustible and can never be fully mined. The man who thinks he has found every gem in it that is to be found is a foolish man indeed:

Many a text of Scripture is written in a secret ink which must be held to the fire of adversity to make it visible.
[C.H. Spurgeon]