

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCT 24TH-25TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

## THE GREAT COMMANDMENT (MATTHEW 22:34-40)

It's the week of Passover and Jesus is in the temple.

- The religious leaders of the day felt threatened by Jesus' identity and authority, so they put together a series of baited questions to try and trap Him so they could find a reason to have Him arrested.
- Team 1 had asked Him about taxes (vs. 17), team 2 about the resurrection (vs. 28), and now team 3 put forward one of their legal experts to ask Him about the Jewish law (vs. 36).

Their most actively debated question was, "what is the greatest commandment?"

- When we consider the fact that the Pharisees viewed the law as 365 negative and 248 positive commandments, we realize how complicated of a question this could become.
- No-one could ever hope to know and fully obey all of these commandments.

Legal experts had divided commandments into "heavy" (important) & "light" (unimportant) categories and would spend countless hours debating which ones were which.

- Jesus drew His answer from the most memorized and recited passage in all of Jewish Scripture- the Shema (Deut. 6:4-5).
- The most important command is to love God with everything we have (vs. 37).

"To Love..."- this is not simply an emotion or feeling, but a decision of the will to act in light of a deep, abiding affection for the object of our commitment.

- "Heart"-all of our passions, desires, and affections.
- "Soul"- the inner, immaterial part of our selves.
- "Mind"-our imagination, intellect, and commitment to learning and growing in thinking.
- Wholehearted love for God is to be...

1. Exclusive 2.The top priority in our lives 3.Obedient 4. Committed

But love for God can't be divorced from love for one's neighbor, so Jesus also quoted Lev. 19:18 and put it on the same level as the Shema (vs. 39).

- If we really love God, we will love the people He created and died to save (1 Jn. 3:10-18).
- All of the law and prophets hang on both of these two commandments- every OT teaching explained how to love God & people (vs. 40).

**Love is ALWAYS the basis for our obedience.**

- You can follow some rules without loving God...
- ...but you can't truly love God without a commitment to follow His commandments.
- Who has your heart? If you don't know, look for where your treasure is.

## A QUESTION OF IDENTITY (MATTHEW 22:40-46)

We get the feeling that Jesus is getting tired of all the baited questions, so now He will ask them a question of His own (vs. 41).

- It begins with an easy question He knows that any Jew would know the answer to- "whose son is the Christ?" (vs. 42).
- The Greek word Christ and the Hebrew word Messiah are synonyms, and they both mean "anointed one" and refer to the promised deliverer of Israel.

It was common knowledge that the Messiah would be a descendant of David (Isa. 9:7, Ps. 2, 89, 132, Jer. 23:5), but there was great speculation & debate on if the Messiah would be divine.

- Many were expecting a political or military leader who would deliver Israel from all oppressors and lead them into a new age of prosperity.
- The Messiah was thought to be a man, but many of the prophecies predicted that He'd have characteristics of God (Isa. 53:9).

So the question, "What do you think about the Christ?" (vs. 41) was controversial one.

- The Pharisees all agreed that He was the son of David, and they respond accordingly (vs. 42), but Jesus asks, "How is that David refers to the Christ as Lord?" (vs. 43-45).
- Jesus quotes Psalm 110, where David appears to do just that.

In this Messianic Psalm, David ("in the Spirit", vs. 43) says, "Yahweh said to my Lord".

- In the English translations of the verse, the first usage of the word, "Lord" is usually printed in capital letters, to show that it translates the Hebrew name for God, "Yahweh".
- The 2nd usage has only the first letter capitalized, to indicate the Hebrew word Adonai.

So why would David call his own son, "Adonai" (master)? How can the Messiah be both David's son and His Lord? (vs. 45)

- The only way this is possible is if the Messiah was more than just a special human being.
- The Messiah would have to be both human ("Son of David") AND divine ("David's Lord").
- No one dared answer Him a word, nor ask Him anymore questions (vs. 46).

**Three questions Jesus is asking you:**

1. Do you believe I am the Christ?- belief in Jesus as Messiah means that you trust Him to deliver you out of your oppression into new life.
2. Do you believe I am the Son of God?- Jesus isn't asking you to believe in Him as just a good example or teacher, but as God.
3. Am I the King of your heart?- have you submitted to Jesus?

## THE HUMBLE ARE EXALTED (MATTHEW 23:1-12)

After Jesus fended off the attacks and directly addressed the religious leaders (mainly the Pharisees), He now addresses the people and His disciples (23:1).

- He began to urge the people to follow God's instruction as it was written and accurately taught, not as it was warped by the Jewish leaders.
- Jesus most likely worshipped as a Pharisee.

There were several denominations of the Jews in the first century with the main groups were the Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, Herodians, and Zealots.

- The Pharisees were more conservative in their respect for the Word of God, and took it at face value.
- Jesus told the people, "they sit on Moses seat, ...so do what they tell you" (vs. 2).

"But don't do the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice" (vs. 3).

- It's possible to know the right words and doctrines, go through the motions of external religion, and be very judgmental about how others are to live...
- And yet, still fail to live up to our own standards while we simultaneously "tie up" others with burdens of how they're to live (vs. 4).

It is hypocrisy personified when we don't practice what we preach and become more interested in judging how others live rather than focusing on how we're to live.

- Hypocrisy is also when we're more than willing to judge and condemn others, but aren't willing to "move a finger" to help them grow in obedience to God.
- Is there consistency between what you say/claim to believe and how you live?

Contrary to Jesus' command to do works in secret (Matt. 6:3-18), the Pharisees did good works only when people were looking (vs. 5).

- They also loved the recognition and applause that comes with their religious status and they loved their titles and "seats of honor" (vs. 6-7).
- We can become worshippers of the applause, recognition, and attention of people over the approval of God.

The Pharisees also had asserted their superiority over others in how they delighted in being called by their titles and making others refer to them as that title (vs. 7).

- When Jesus tells us to avoid this practice (vs. 8-10), He's not speaking against any form of spiritual leadership within the people of God.
- His words are a rebuke to those who have used their leadership to assert some sort of superiority over others.

The scribes and Pharisees were defining themselves as superior by making others call them rabbi, teacher, instructor, and spiritual father- and in so doing, they were drawing people to themselves and away from Christ.

- As disciples, we have one instructor- Christ! (vs. 10).
- True greatness in leadership is not earning a title or position and having others fawn over how wise and insightful you are- it's being a servant (vs. 11).

Anyone who exalts himself will be humbled by God (vs. 12a)- regardless of title, position, and honorable status in the eyes of men, if a person has spent their life exalting themselves, they will be humbled in judgment by God when their true, lowly status in the Kingdom is revealed.

- But the person who voluntarily humbles themselves, through service and avoidance of undue attention, will be exalted by God (vs. 12b).

- It's possible to genuinely believe that we're doing God's work, believing God's Word, and accomplishing God's will, and yet genuinely miss God's heart.
- It's possible to be right and yet fail to truly love God and love people.
- It's possible to believe in the concept of Jesus intellectually, but not truly surrender our hearts and lives to Him.

**The answer? Wholehearted, exclusive, obedient, and committed love for God.**

Loving Religion more than Jesus. What (or who) has your heart?