

The Lord Answers Questions that were Designed to Discredit Him

Matthew 22:15-33

Matthew 22:15-33 - *"Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk. ¹⁶ And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men. ¹⁷ Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" ¹⁸ But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? ¹⁹ Show Me the tax money." So they brought Him a denarius. ²⁰ And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" ²¹ They said to Him, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." ²² When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.*

²³ *The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, ²⁴ saying: "Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁵ Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. ²⁶ Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. ²⁷ Last of all the woman died also. ²⁸ Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her."*

²⁹ *Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. ³⁰ For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. ³¹ But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ³² 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." ³³ And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching."*

Background Notes

This confrontation between the Lord and those who were trying to trap Him probably took place in the Temple courts during the last week of our Lord's earthly ministry, just before His crucifixion. After the Lord cleansed the Temple, He and His disciples stayed overnight in Bethany, east of the Mount of Olives. The next day the Lord returned to the Temple and taught and answered questions in the Temple courts. *"When He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching...."* (Matthew 21:23).

From Matthew 22 to the end of Matthew 23, the Lord was in the Temple courts, teaching the people and answering the questions of the critics and skeptics. This confrontation with Pharisees, Herodians and Sadducees probably took place on the Tuesday of the final week of our Lord's earthly ministry.

It is significant that the Pharisees and the Herodians were together. The Herodians were a political party that favored the rule of Herod because they didn't want to rock the boat with Rome. They preferred to follow a "peace at any price" policy of appeasement. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were adamantly opposed to Roman rule. So normally the Pharisees and the Herodians were at odds with one another - but here they were united against Christ.

This is often true even today, isn't it? Sadly, people of widely differing backgrounds and viewpoints unite in their opposition to Jesus Christ.

Doctrinal Points

1. While on earth, believers should pay their taxes.

It has often been said that there are only two sure things in life: death and taxes! That's not a Bible verse, but it certainly is biblical! Hebrews 9:27 says, "...it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment..." And in Matthew 22 we learn that we should pay our taxes.

The Pharisees and the Herodians tried to trap the Lord by asking Him if it was right to pay Caesar's poll tax. If the Lord were to answer "No," they would tell the Roman authorities and have Him arrested. But if the Lord were to say "Yes," they hoped that the common people, who hated the Roman oppression, would turn against Him. But our Lord answered neither yes nor no.

The Lord said, "Show me a coin." (Notice that the Lord apparently had no coin of His own.) Then He said, "*Whose image and inscription is this?*" When they replied that it was Caesar's image, the Lord made His now famous statement: "*Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.*" What a perfect answer! Caesar's image was stamped on the coin, therefore be subject to Caesar and give Caesar his tax. But the **image of God** is "stamped" on mankind (Genesis 1:27), therefore we should be subject to God, and give back to God what belongs to Him: **our lives**. What a perfect answer!

Some Christians think that they shouldn't have to pay taxes because they're citizens of heaven, or that taxes should be voluntary under the U.S. constitution -- and many other reasons are proposed as to why they shouldn't have to pay taxes! However, if you decide to stay in the U.S.A. and live in safety under its police protection, use its schools and roads and parks, and participate in its many other benefits -- then pay your taxes! "*Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.*" While on earth, believers should pay their taxes.

2. When in heaven, believers will not be married.

“The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, ²⁴ saying: “Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁵ Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother.

²⁶ Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. ²⁷ Last of all the woman died also. ²⁸ Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her.”

²⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. ³⁰ For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. ³¹ But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ³² ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” ³³ And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching” (v23-33).

The Sadducees were the “theological liberals” of the day. They didn’t believe in miracles, therefore they didn’t believe in the resurrection of the body, and they didn’t believe in life after death (v23). So the Sadducees came up with a far-out hypothetical “case” to try to trap the Lord and show Him that (according to their incorrect way of thinking) the concept of the resurrection and life after death was ridiculous. They referred to the marriage law of Deuteronomy 25, which said that if a man died with no heir, his unmarried brother should marry the widow, and any children born would be the heirs of the deceased husband. So the Sadducees proposed that seven brothers followed this law, but they all died leaving no offspring, and then the woman also died. So whose wife would she be in the resurrection?

The Sadducees obviously thought that they were very clever to have come up with this hypothetical case. I wonder how many hours they spent planning this ridiculous scenario! Well, the Lord burst their bubble of pride and told them they were mistaken, and way off base! They didn’t know the Scriptures about marriage, and they didn’t know the power of God in reference to the resurrection: *“For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven.”*

Notice what this verse **doesn’t** say! It doesn’t say that we will become angels when we die. That’s a common misconception, but according to the Bible, it’s not true. But just as angels don’t marry, so believers in their resurrected bodies will not marry. There is no “married state” in heaven. But the blessings of heaven will be so wonderful, and we will be so filled with the joy of the Lord, that we won’t even think about marriage! When I mention this Scripture to my Bible college students who are looking forward to marriage, some of them are disappointed. But it’s true! When we’re enjoying the amazing blessings of heaven, we won’t think about marriage! When in heaven, believers will not be married.

Practical Application

Let's believe in the verbal inspiration of Scripture, as Jesus did.

Many people have a faulty view of the doctrine of the **inspiration of Scripture**. Even some Christians do. Oh, they believe the thoughts and concepts are inspired, and they believe that God gave the thoughts and concepts to the biblical writers. They know the writers didn't dream the Scripture up by themselves! But they don't believe that God superintended the process of inspiration - right down to the verbal level. They don't believe that God controlled the very words that were written down.

But Jesus did! Jesus believed in the verbal inspiration of Scripture - and so should we. The Lord based His argument with the Sadducees, that there is life after death, on a verb tense in Exodus 3:6, "*But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob' God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*"

He based His argument on a verb tense that God had used in Exodus 3:6 -- "*I AM*" not "I was." God spoke as though Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were still alive, even though they had been dead for many years. God used the present tense, meaning **there is life after death!** Even the Pharisees, who believed in the resurrection of the body and life after death, had never thought of this argument before! It was all based on a verb tense in the text – and this required a belief in the **verbal inspiration** of Scripture.

If the Sadducees had asked you that question, and you had only the Old Testament (since the New Testament wasn't written yet), what Scripture would you have used to show the resurrection is true, and to show that the Sadducees were wrong? I don't think that I would have gone to Exodus 3:6. I think I would have gone to Job 19:25-26: "*For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God...*"

Now there's a great text for the resurrection of the body after death! In fact, Job 19:25-26 is probably the clearest reference in the Old Testament to bodily resurrection. But the Lord didn't go there. Why not? In dealing with the Sadducees, He went to Exodus 3:6. The Lord took the Sadducees up on their own ground. The Sadducees, the theological liberals of the day, held the Pentateuch to be a higher authority than the rest of the Old Testament Scriptures. So what did the Lord do? He went to the Pentateuch! He beat them on their own ground! And - His response was all based on a verb tense in the text that required a belief in the **verbal inspiration of Scripture!**

Let's believe in the verbal inspiration of Scripture, just as Jesus did!