

Episode #904 Matthew 22 Part 6-The Greatest Commandment

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. The Lord was having a final, conclusive confrontation with the corrupt, religious leaders of Israel in Jerusalem. They were trying to trap Him with words, and the Sadducees, who do not believe in resurrection, had come forward with a hypothetical situation they thought made resurrection impossible in Matthew 22:23-30. Yet the Lord pointed out their lack of faith in the power of God to arrange marriages as He sees fit. He is not bound by human decisions. That marriage will exist in the resurrection is shown by multiple passages; example, Isaiah 54:1.

III. Marriage and the Resurrection. Matthew 22:23-33.

- A. Verse 31. The Lord moves on from marriage in the resurrection to just resurrection in general. Thus His statement about the power of God was, again, about their lack of faith in His power to end a marriage, not about their lack of faith in resurrection. The Lord is not trying to prove either that the dead are living or that the dead are dead. His point is entirely about resurrection. The sixth and last time the Lord chides them “have you not read?” in Matthew. Notice that the Lord personalizes the word spoken to Moses long in the past. This word was not just to Moses, but was to all those reading the book of Exodus fifteen hundred years later.
- B. Verse 32. “I Am” is the Greek *ego eimi*, the emphatic “I Am,” but followed by “the God” etc. The conclusion is that these dead ones must rise, for if they do not, He would be the God of the dead. The Lord proves to them that they did not know their “five books” at all, for if they did, they would see resurrection is there as well! Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been dead for hundreds of years when God said this to Moses in Exodus 3:6. Yet He spoke of these men as living, not because they were living right at that moment, but because the dead will rise.
- C. Verse 33. The Lord often astonished people, both with His actions (His mighty works) and with His words and wisdom. This is often said of Him in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Then only once in Acts, when the deputy of Crete, Sergius Paulus, was astonished at the doctrine of the Lord that Paul taught. It was the same teaching by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

IV. The Great Commandment. Matthew 22:34-40.

- A. Verse 34. “Silenced” could be “muzzled.” The Sadducees had probably often used this argument on the Pharisees to great effect. Now the Lord has spoiled this pet argument of theirs by answering it and showing it up as foolish. One would think the Pharisees would be happy, but they were more concerned with the greater goal of silencing the Lord than they were with silencing the Sadducees. They probably figured that they had a stronger position than the Sadducees anyway. “Gathered together” is the Greek *sunago* (synagogued) against Him. The words “against Him” are left out of the *New King James Version*.
- B. Verse 35. A “lawyer” such as this was not in courtrooms, as we think of today, but an expert in the law of Moses, and perhaps a teacher or promoter of it.
- C. Verse 36. “Teacher” is a *Didaskalos*, a master-teacher, a rabbi who would take disciples, as the Lord had done. “Which” could mean what kind of commandment? Not necessarily the specific one, but the type of commandment. The moral? The

- religious? The ethical? The judicial? Etc. Notice he puts it great, not greatest, though that is the idea, or great versus small rather than greatest and least. It is evident from their writings that these lawyers were always arguing about this and, no matter which one you picked out, someone else would be arguing against it and for another.
- D. Verse 37. The Lord does not hesitate, but immediately has an answer. Notice that this is not one of the Ten Commandments! Many try to make out that the Ten Commandments are the most important commandments in the law. Yet when asked which is most important, Christ passes over all these and points them to Deuteronomy 6:5 (might instead of mind), showing that there were other commandments more important than the Ten! “Love” is the Greek *agape*, meaning to love Him with an active, self-sacrificing love. Greek “in the whole heart of you, and in the whole soul of you, and in the whole mind of you.” “Heart” is the Greek *kardia*, meaning the whole of your inner being, not just your emotions. Your whole inner being should be filled with love for God. “Soul” is the Greek *psuche*, means with all your emotions, like what we would use “heart” for in English. All your emotions should be focused on love for God. “Mind” is the Greek *dianoia*, meaning mind, understanding, or thoughts. Every thought you have should be full of love for God.
- E. Verse 38. “First” is the Greek *protos*, meaning the chiefest, best, or most important. “Great” is the same word as the lawyer used in verse 36, but the Lord puts it first instead of second to greatly emphasize it, along with “first.”
- V. Conclusion: The Lord revealed that even the books of Moses proved resurrection when God spoke of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob long after they were dead. The Sadducees were muzzled by His answer, so the Pharisees returned to try to trap him. A lawyer of theirs wanted to know which commandment is great, and the Lord took him, not to the Ten Commandments, but to loving the Lord your God. Do we count this as the greatest and chiefest of all commandments? Do we love the Lord in all our motivations, emotions, and thoughts?