

Matthew: His Life And His Gospel

– Part 14

Matthew 22:1-10 [New King James] *“And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, ‘See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.’” But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, “The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.” So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.’”*

This is more easily understood if we treat this as two parables, not just one.

The events in this passage were completely in accordance with normal Jewish customs.

When the invitations to a great feast such as a wedding, the time was not stated, and when the preparations were fully ready, the servants were sent out with a final summons to tell the guests to come. The time difference between invitation and summons could be considerable, yet the invited guests insultingly refused the summons.

Jesus Christ was driving home the point He had made in the previous parable of the wicked husbandmen, once again it was an accusation of the Jews.

Ages before the Jews had been invited to a special wedding, [Revelation 19:6-9] as God’s special people.

Yet when God’s Son came into the world and they were summoned to follow Him and accept Him, they contemptuously refused.

The result was that the invitation of God went out to those people whom the Jews considered Gentiles and sinners.

Verse seven at first glance seems to be extreme but when we consider that Matthew was writing his gospel between AD80 and AD90, the destruction of Jerusalem had taken place by the armies of Rome.

We can also relate this to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ when the world’s cities will be flattened in the great tribulation, [Matthew 24:21-22; Revelation chapters 6-9].

Matthew 22:11-14 [New King James] *“But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ For many are called, but few are chosen.”*

To understand what this “wedding garment” really was, we have to go to the marriage of Jesus Christ to the true Christian Church.

Revelation 19:6-9 [New King James] *“And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, ‘Alleluia! For the Lord God*

Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.’ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!”’ And he said to me, ‘These are the true sayings of God.’”

The wedding garment of the bride who would marry Jesus Christ was “*the righteous acts of the saints,*” all true Christians are listed as “*saints,*” [Romans 1:7; Romans 8:27; Hebrews 13:24; 1 Corinthians 14:33, etc.]

Notice “*he was speechless,*” this man did not realise how the King saw him.

“*Many called, few chosen,*” many people may hear the gospel message but not all will have their chance of salvation in their generation, [2 Thessalonians 2:13].

John 6:44 [New King James] “*No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.*”

Only God the Father knows the best time for each individual to have their chance of salvation through accepting Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

Note there are many who will be “*raised up*” in the “*last days.*”

Revelation 20:11-13 [New King James] “*Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.*”

This is the time of salvation for the vast majority of humanity. In a time that is free from the deception of Satan and his false ministries, [2 Corinthians 11:14-15; Revelation 20:1-3].

Matthew 22:15-22 [New King James] “*Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk. 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. Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?’ But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, ‘Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the tax money.’ So they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, ‘Whose image and inscription is this?’ 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. When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left Him and went their way.’”*

The Jewish leaders, after being exposed as to their attitude of mind in three parables given by Jesus Christ, launched a counter-attack, by asking Jesus Christ carefully formulated questions in public, while the crowd looked on and listened, the aim being to make Jesus Christ discredit Himself by His own words in public.

One of the three taxes imposed by the Roman government was a poll tax paid by every male person from age of fourteen to age of sixty-five, and every female person aged twelve to sixty-five years. It amounted to one Denarius, this is the tribute coin that Jesus Christ referred to and was the equivalent to a day-labourer’s daily wage.

This was **not** the outcome the Pharisees expected.

Matthew 22:23-33 [New King James] “*The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, 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. Now there were with*

us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her.’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. 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.’ And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.”

When the Pharisees were routed the Sadducees took up the battle. The Sadducees were not many in number, but they were wealthy, the aristocratic, and governing class. For instance, chief priests were Sadducees.

They were ready to co-operate with the Roman government, if co-operation was the price they paid for the retention of their own privileges.

In thought they were quite ready to open their minds to Greek ideas. In their Jewish belief they were traditionalists. They refused to accept the oral and scribal law, which was of paramount importance to the Pharisees.

The Sadducees did not accept the prophets or the poetical books of scripture, only the first five books of the Old Testament.

In particular they were at variance with the Pharisees in that they completely denied any life after death.

The Sadducees produced a question for Jesus Christ which they believed reduced the doctrine of the resurrection of the body to an absurdity.

There was a Jewish custom of Levirate Marriage. How far it was carried out in practice is very doubtful, [Deuteronomy 25:5-10].

If a man died childless, his brother should take the widow to be his wife and the first son of that union would carry on the name of the dead brother, and his inheritance.

This law protected women who were left alone, because in that culture they usually had no other means of support themselves. We see an example of this law in action in the Book of Ruth.

Jesus Christ began His reply by laying down one principle, the basic error of thinking of heaven in terms of earth, and thinking of eternity in terms of time.

Because the Sadducees only accepted the first five books of The Bible, Jesus Christ answered from the first five books.

One of the most used titles for God was, “the God of Abraham and Isaac and of Jacob.”

God cannot be the God of dead men and of mouldering corpses. The living God must be the God of living men. The Sadducean case was shattered. Jesus Christ had done what the wisest rabbis had never been able to do.

Jesus Christ had shown that there is life after physical death.

[Please download and study the articles on this website under the main heading ‘Death And Life After Death.’ You will be eternally grateful that you did.]

Matthew 22:34-40 [New King James] *“But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him,*

and saying, 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?' Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'" This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.'"

This at first look seems to be a continued attack on Jesus Christ by the Pharisees, but if we read the account in Mark, [**Mark 12:28-34**] the atmosphere is different.

The scribe did not ask the question to trip Jesus Christ up, he asked it in gratitude that Jesus Christ had confused the Sadducees, and to enable Jesus Christ to demonstrate how well He could answer. The passage in Mark ends with the scribe and Jesus Christ very close to each other.

We could say that Jesus Christ in this passage laid down a complete definition of true religion.

Jesus Christ first quotes from **Deuteronomy 6:5**, the sentence that every Jewish worship service quoted at its beginning and the first text that every Jewish child commits to memory.

We are to give to God a total love that dominates our emotions, directs our thoughts and a love that is the dynamic of our actions.

The second quotation is from **Leviticus 19:18**, which shows that the only way a person can prove that they love God is in fact by loving our fellow human beings.

Do not overlook the order that the commandments came!

It is only when we love God that all humans become lovable.

Matthew 22:41-46 [New King James] *"While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, 'What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?' They said to Him, 'The Son of David.' He said to them, 'How then does David in the Spirit call Him "Lord," saying: "The LORD said to my Lord, sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool"? If David then calls Him "Lord," how is He his Son?' And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore."*

Jesus Christ turned the tables by asking the Pharisees a penetrating question. [Also recorded in **Mark 12:35-37**; **Luke 20:41-44**].

Jesus Christ quotes **Psalms 110:1**, a psalm of David inspired by the Holy Spirit.

The Pharisees knew that the Messiah would be a descendant of David but they did **not** understand He would be one Person of the Triune Eternal God.

Psalms 110:1 shows that the Messiah would be greater than David.

Hebrews 1:13 uses the same text to prove Jesus Christ's deity.

The most important question we will ever have to answer is what we personally believe about Jesus Christ.

All other theological questions are irrelevant until we believe that Jesus Christ is Who He said He is, God.

John 1:1-18 [New King James] *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That*

was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, 'This was He of whom I said, "He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me."' And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him."

This is a basic belief that every true Christian must accept.

Our next step in a Christian life is to prove we believe this by our actions.

Romans 12:1 [NIV] *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship."*

Offer our lives to God as a *"living sacrifice."*

The Greek word translated *"bodies"* is *"soma"* meaning whole life, physical body, mind and *"human spirit,"* [Job 32:8; Proverbs 20:27; 1 Corinthians 2:11].

When we do this the Holy Spirit will begin to re-educate us, [Romans 12:2] and lead us into the real truth about God, [John 16:13] and begin to develop the character of God in us, [Galatians 5:22-25] which is the second part of God's plan for eventually all humanity, [Genesis 1:26-27].

The Hebrew word translated *"likeness"* is *"demûwth"* which means manner or character.

Matthew 23:1-4 [New King James] *"Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.'"*

Here we see the Jewish conviction of the continuity of their faith.

God gave the law to Moses, Moses handed it to Joshua, Joshua transmitted it to the elders, who passed it down to the prophets who gave it to the scribes and Pharisees.

But the Pharisees' traditions and their interpretations of the original law as given to Moses, along with their applications of the law, had become as important to them as God's law itself.

Their laws were **not** all bad, some even beneficial. The problem arise when the religious leaders:

- a) Took their man-made rules as serious as God's inspired laws.
- b) Told the people to obey these man-made rules, but did **not** do so themselves.
- c) Only obeyed these rules, **not** to honour God, but in a way that made themselves look good and pious.

Usually Jesus Christ did not condemn what the Pharisees taught, but what they were – hypocrites.

Matthew 23:5-10 [New King James] *"But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men,*

'Rabbi, Rabbi.' But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.'

Phylacteries were little leather boxes containing scriptures. Very religious people wore these boxes on their forehead and arms in order to obey, [**Deuteronomy 6:8** and **Exodus 13:9, 16**].

But the phylacteries had become more important for the status they gave than for the truth they contained.

Jesus Christ again exposed the hypocritical attitudes of the religious leaders. They knew the scriptures but did not live by them. They did not care about being holy, just looking holy in order to receive the people's adoration and praise.

All true Christians must be sure that our actions match our beliefs.

Jesus Christ is not against all leadership, we need true Christian leaders, but He is against leadership that serves itself rather than other people.

"Rabbi" meant *"my great one"* or master in contrast to a slave; the only Master we have is Jesus Christ, not a position or title any human should apply to themselves.

We are **not** to call any person *"father"* in a spiritual context, for only God is our spiritual Father.

Nor are we to call any person *"teacher"* in a spiritual context, for only God the Holy Spirit can lead us into all truth, [**John 16:13**] as the Spirit of Jesus Christ, [**Romans 8:9**] who is the Truth, [**John 14:6**].

Matthew 23:11-12 [New King James] *"But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

To Jesus Christ greatness comes from serving, giving of our life to help others know the true Eternal God that we worship.

Service keeps us aware of the needs of others and stops us from focusing only on ourselves.

This is a much-needed chance in every part of human society, not only today but in all past and future generations.

Matthew 23:13 [New King James] *"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in."*

The word *"hypocrite"* is the normal Greek word for *"actor,"* in its worst sense a pretender, a person who acts a part and wears a mask to cover their true feelings.

Jesus Christ saw scribes and Pharisees as men who were acting a part.

Their whole concept of religion consisted of outward appearances and outward observances. The wearing of elaborate phylacteries and tassels were part of acting a character that was **not** theirs.

All the time the real person was hidden, for in their hearts and minds was bitterness, envy, pride and arrogance.

This accusation holds good in any person who lives life on the assumption that religion consists in external observances and external acts of any kind.

Being called “*rabbi*” or master, allowing people to address you as their “*spiritual father*,” or “*teacher*,” or “*reverent*,” **all of these titles are only to be applied to the Eternal God, not any human being.**

The wearing of special clothes that set you apart and superior to other human beings.

All such outward show point people to the person and **not** to the Saviour Jesus Christ and God the Father.

This is why such leadership prevents people from entering the Kingdom of God, which is a society on earth where God’s will is perfectly done as it is in heaven, [Matthew 6:10].

To be a citizen of this Kingdom, and to do the will of God, are the same thing.

Matthew 23:15 [New King James] “*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.*”

The Pharisees’ converts were attracted to the details of their additions to the laws given by God to Moses, that completely missed God to whom the laws pointed.

A religion of rituals puts pressure on people to surpass others in what they know and do. Thus a hypocritical teacher was likely to have students who were even more hypocritical.

Matthew 23:17-22 [New King James] “*Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? And, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.’ Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.*”

The Jewish legalists were masters of evasion, [Matthew 5:33-37].

Broadly speaking, an oath was only binding which without equivocation employed the name of God, such an oath must be kept no matter what the cost. Any other oath might be legitimately broken.

The technique of evasion may suit the sharp practice of this world, but it can never suit the open honesty of the mind of a true Christian.

Matthew 23:23-26 [New King James] “*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.*”

The tithe was an essential part of Jewish religious regulations, [Deuteronomy 14:22; Leviticus 27:30], the mint, anise and cumin are herbs and only a very small part of any garden. The same person may forget the more important parts of the law, that of love, mercy and justice.

To avoid the risk of drinking anything unclean all wine was strained through a muslin gauze so any impurity is taken out before drinking. **The natural humour of Jesus Christ once again is shown in this pictorial parable.**

Remember all the uncleanness was ceremonially unclean, not physically unclean, and caused a person to be barred from worship of God in the temple.

A person was unclean if, for instance, they touched a dead body, or came in contact with a Gentile. A woman was also unclean if she had an issue of blood, even if that issue of blood was perfectly normal and healthy. If a person who was unclean touched or handled any vessel, it became unclean and any other person who touched or handled that vessel became in turn unclean.

The laws that governed the cleansing of vessels were fantastically complicated and may even only be accomplished by being smashed and the broken pieces taken outside the area occupied by human beings.

The food and drink inside a vessel might have been obtained by cheating, extortion or theft, that did not matter so long as the vessel itself was ceremonially clean.

Matthew 23:27-28 [New King James] *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”*

One of the commonest places for tombs was by the side of the road.

As we have seen, anyone who came in contact with a dead body became unclean, [Numbers 19:16]. **So anyone who came in contact with one of these roadside tombs automatically became unclean.**

If this happened to a person on the crowded roads as they travelled up to Jerusalem for the Passover, they would **not** be allowed to take the Passover.

To avoid such an accidental thing happening it was a Jewish practice to whitewash these tombs so they were more clearly seen, just before Passover.

This made the tombs glint white and almost lovely in the sunshine, but within were bones and bodies that could defile you if you touched the tomb.

This was a precise picture of what the Pharisees were. Their outward actions were intensely religious, but their inward hearts and minds were foul and putrid with sin.

Once a person knows they are good, the pride it generates causes that goodness to leave them, however it may continue to appear to other people by what they see on the outside of that person.

Matthew 23:29-36 [New King James] *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.’ Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’ guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.”*

Jesus Christ is charging the Jews with the accusation that the taint of murder is written their history and had not yet worked itself out.

Verse 34 refers to the future prophets and wise men that Jesus Christ would send out among them, some they would murder, beginning with Stephen, [Acts 7:59-60].

Matthew 23:37-39 [New King James] *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate;*

for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"

Here is all the poignant tragedy of rejected love, Jesus Christ is not speaking as a stern judge of all the earth, [2 Corinthians 5:10-12] but as the lover of all human beings, [John 3:16-17].

This shows us clearly the consequences of rejecting Jesus Christ.

In AD70 Jerusalem became a heap of ruins, this disaster was the direct consequence of the rejection of Jesus Christ.

Had the Jews accepted the Christian way of love and abandoned the way of power politics, Rome would never have descended on them with its avenging might.

It is the fact of history that the nation that rejects the true Eternal God and Jesus Christ is doomed to eventual disaster.

Jesus Christ finishes this statement quoting from **Psalms 118:26** that expresses the great mercy of the Triune God towards His people.