

Gospel of Matthew Chapter 22 -- John Karmelich

1. My title for Chapter 22 is, “the silence is deafening”.
 - a) That’s an old cliché that means the lack of a verbal response by a person or a group can say as much as if the person did verbally respond.
 - b) In Chapter 22 we have 5 stories. All five end with a “very loud silence” from the crowd.
 - i) The first is Jesus telling a parable about a wedding feast.
 - a) The purpose is to tell who is and who is not coming to heaven.
 - b) The purpose was to put-down the religious Jews and to show their lack of faith in Jesus will cost them their eternal salvation.
 - c) What is noticeable about this parable is a lack of response by the Pharisees.
 - d) At the end “their silence is deafening”.
 - ii) The next story is Jesus answering the question, “Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar?
 - a) The Pharisees sent their disciples to try to trap Jesus into taking sides on a controversial debate.
 - b) When Jesus gave his answer, again “their silence is deafening”.
 - (1) The text has a very “loud” lack of a response to Jesus’ answer.
 - c) The Pharisees’ disciples didn’t comment any further after Jesus’ answer.
 - iii) The next story is about the Sadducees asking about the resurrection.
 - a) The Sadducees were a Jewish “denomination” that didn’t believe in the concept of the resurrection.
 - b) They were attempting to trap Jesus with their question.
 - c) Again, when Jesus gave his answer, again “their silence is deafening”.
 - iv) The next story is some Pharisees asking, “which is the greatest commandment?”
 - a) This may have been another attempt to trick Jesus as the Pharisees debated among themselves which is the greatest of all the bible commandments.
 - b) Again, the text has a very loud lack of response to Jesus’ answer.
 - v) The final story is Jesus asking the Pharisees about just who is the Messiah.
 - a) Let’s look at the last verse of this chapter, Verse 46:
 - b) “No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.”
 - c) One can see, in summary why I call this chapter, “The silence is deafening”.
 - i) In every case, you can see how Jesus is the final authority in a debate.
 2. There are other lessons for us to pick up as well in this chapter:
 - a) One cannot “out debate Jesus”, or the word of God for that matter in proving Jesus is the promised Messiah.
 - i) The mistake we make is we try to use our own wits to defend Christianity as opposed to the bible itself. The internal evidence from the bible is enough to support Jesus as the Messiah. We don’t have to add anything to that.
 - ii) The reason people refuse to believe is because it means changing their lifestyle, and that is what they refuse to do.
 - b) Notice also when the crowd tries to pin Jesus in a debate question, Jesus “rises above” the debate itself and points out the underlying cause of the debate. We’ll cover that more through the chapter.
 - c) The first story in particular has more great lessons on just what is required for salvation.
 - i) We’ll take that one on more in a page or two.
 - d) Several of these stories also give us a few clues as to what life in heaven is like.
 - i) The first parable about the wedding banquet teaches us who is invited to heaven.
 - ii) The third story talks about lack-of-marriage in heaven and how we are “like angels”. We will discuss that point when we get there.

3. Chapter 22, Verse 1: Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying:
- a) Chapter 22 opens with a parable.
 - i) In the last part of Chapter 21, Jesus was addressing some Pharisees in the crowd along with his disciples.
 - ii) Chapter 21, verses 28-46 had two parables:
 - a) The parable of the two sons (one did what father wanted, other did not).
 - b) The parable of vineyard tenants who killed the vineyard owner's son when that son came to collect the rent.
 - iii) Chapter 22 now opens with the 3rd parable in this trilogy.
 - iv) In the first 2 parables, Jesus commented after each one how they are illustrations about salvation. Jesus was specifically addressing the Pharisees in the crowd who were trusting in their own religious works as opposed to their belief in Jesus.
 - v) In this parable, you will notice there is no follow-up comment by Jesus, nor by the Pharisees. It gets back to my "silence is deafening" comments.
 - b) Let's summarize the parable before I dissect it and analyze it to death. ☺
 - i) The story is about a king who prepares a banquet for his son's wedding.
 - ii) The king sends invitations to lots of people.
 - iii) All those people make excuses and refuse to come.
 - iv) When the king sends more messengers, those invitee's kill the messengers.
 - v) The king then kills the invitee's.
 - vi) The king, who wants people at the celebration, then gives the orders to invite anyone else willing to come. The newcomers then come to the wedding. (Gee, after watching the first group get killed, I'd be there real quick. ☺)
 - vii) Finally, there is the story-within-the-story of one of the guests who wasn't wearing "a wedding gown". This person gets thrown out of the wedding banquet. Jesus then compares that person to one who is going to hell.
4. Verse 2: "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son.
- a) The term "kingdom of heaven" has several meanings in the bible.
 - i) It can refer to those who are saved, here on earth.
 - ii) It can also refer to our next life in heaven.
 - iii) Either way, it is about the same group of people.
 - b) Near the end of the book of Revelation, there is the fact that there is going to be a wedding banquet for Jesus. We, as believers in the church, are the "bride" of Christ.
 - i) "Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb (Jesus) has come, and his bride (us) has made herself ready." (Rev. 19:7, NIV)
 - ii) "Then the angel said to me, 'Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" (Rev. 19:9a, NIV)
 - iii) My point is that this parable, here in Matthew, is about eternal salvation and the plans for us in heaven.
 - c) Religious Jews also understood that the Jewish nation is referred to in the Old Testament as the "God's bride" in the sense that even though they have been unfaithful many times, God is committed to Israel despite of her faults.
 - i) The book of Hosea teaches on the illustration how God loves Israel "like a bride".
 - ii) "The LORD said to me (Hosea), "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes (the raisin cakes refers to other gods)." (Hosea 3:1, NIV)
 - iii) This is another reason why I take the view that God's commitment to the nation of Israel is unconditional. Most Jews of that day did not see salvation as they refused to accept Jesus. There will come a day where God once again will turn his focus back on Israel due to that unconditional relationship with the nation.

5. Verse 3: He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.
- a) A custom of that time for a king's banquet is to have a "double-invitation".
 - i) First, the invitations are sent saying the king is going to have a banquet and give the rough time (as opposed to exact time) of the banquet.
 - ii) Next, comes the "second invitation" when the wedding announcers say, "Come on everyone, now is the time."
 - b) The last phrase of Verse 3 is one of the saddest in the chapter: "but they refused to come."
 - i) It is hard for me to imagine anyone not wanting to go to a king's banquet.
 - ii) Imagine an American president who you really hated.
 - a) You turn down an invitation to his party, because you can't stand the king.
 - iii) The point is Jesus is "the king's son", and even though Jesus is legitimately the king's son, the resentment by Pharisees of that fact means they wouldn't come.
6. Verse 4: "Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'
- a) These two verses show the patience of God.
 - i) In the story, we have the king saying in effect, "Well, maybe they won't come because my messengers said something to offend them. Just to make sure, I'll send some more messengers and tell them the food is all ready."
 - ii) God knows all things. God knows in people's hearts that they refused the initiation. But out of God's love, he is pleading with those who were invited to please come. God understands the consequences of eternal hell better than those who were invited.
 - b) This parable refers to the Nation of Israel.
 - i) One has to remember that because God "picked" the Nation of Israel to bring the Messiah into the world, they get the first invitation to the "wedding banquet".
 - a) Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." (Romans 1:16, NIV)
 - ii) What if the Jewish nation accepted Jesus?
 - a) Would Jesus then set up his eternal kingdom at that point?
 - b) We don't know the answer. We do know that God knows all things in advance, and knew they would reject Jesus. That was part of God's "overall plan" to have people of all races as believers in Christ.
7. Verse 5: "But they paid no attention and went off--one to his field, another to his business.
- a) The people invited to wedding were more interested in "their business" than the kings.
 - b) Nothing has changed much today. People are more interested in "making a buck" than going to church. Look today at the majority of the world (or a majority of Americans) who refuse to accept Jesus because they are "too busy going about their own business".
8. Verse 6: The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them.
- a) I take the view the largest number of people in hell will be those who simply "ignored" Jesus and tried to be neutral. Those are the people in Verse 5.
 - b) Verse 6 represents another group: Those who actively opposed the Gospel message.
 - i) The group in Verse 5 "paid no attention." The group in Verse 6 "killed them."
 - ii) The majority of non-believers don't make a big deal about it. They make statements like, "Well, your religion is good for you, but I have my own views" or something to that nature. Verse 6 is the vocal-atheist or the zealous cult-member that does his utmost to tell people that Jesus is not God.
 - c) Verse 6 also represents those who don't want to hear the Gospel message.
 - i) They don't want anyone to convict them of their sins, so they "kill the messenger".

9. Verse 7: The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.
- a) Well, that's not good. ☺
 - b) This verse implies that non-believers only get "so many chances" and that's it.
 - i) How many "chances" they get is God's decision and not ours.
 - ii) Our job is to be a witness to them and pray for them.
 - c) Remember that the people who refused to come were busy "doing their business".
 - i) Here in Verse 7, the king burned their city.
 - ii) Stop and think of all the effort people do to "have more stuff". They work so hard as to ignore God to get more stuff. Now the king is "burning their stuff". This verse is another reminder of how futile material items are in comparison to a relationship with God.
 - a) I'm not saying we have to take a vow of poverty. We just have to have the proper perspective of life on this earth as compared to eternal rewards.
10. Verse 8: "Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come.⁹ Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.'¹⁰ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.
- a) Notice in Verse 8 it says, "those I invited did not deserve to come."
 - i) Jesus was speaking to people who spent their life studying the Old Testament.
 - ii) They did their best to obey the laws of God the best they could.
 - iii) Yet, the message is they don't' deserve to come.
 - iv) That's the Gospel message. Your entrance into heaven is not based on how good you are, but on the question, "What have you done with my son Jesus?"
 - b) Verses 9-10 say in effect, "I'm the king and I'm having a party and a party needs guests. Go get anybody who's willing to come. I don't care what they are like as long as they are willing to come (notice the phrase "good and bad" in verse 10).
 - i) Remember that Matthew wrote this to a Jewish audience.
 - ii) Their view of heaven is that it is only for Jews or Jewish converts. Further, it is only for those Jews who obey God's commandments.
 - iii) For Jesus to imply that "anyone" could come to heaven simply by accepting the king's (God's) invitation is a difficult concept to accept.
 - iv) Personally, I picture Matthew smiling as he wrote this quote. Remember that Matthew was Jewish, but was also a tax collector. He was despised as a traitor for his past life. He is getting reassured that despite his past, he is getting acceptance.
11. Verse 11: "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes.¹² 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless.
- a) First of all, this is not a fashion comment. Jesus is not saying you don't make it into the heaven based on your choice in clothing. ("I'm sorry, that belt does not go with those shoes. You can't come in here." ☺)
 - b) A wedding banquet of that time, especially one given by the king, required special wedding clothes. There is a garment-at-the-door waiting for you as you come in.
 - c) For someone to not wear that garment, you are making the statement, "I'm here, but I don't want to be here." Another statement is, "Yes I'm here to check it out, but I don't like the king, nor his son, so I'm not wearing the garment out of protest".

- d) A few verses back, we had those who refuse to come be killed. So in this parable, who does this not-dressed-properly person represent?
- i) Most commentators argue that it represents false believers within the church. It represents those who come to church but don't really have a heart for Jesus.
 - ii) It can refer to cult members, or false-teachers or simply anyone claiming to be a Christian, but denying the fundamental facts about God the Father and Jesus.
 - iii) In this parable, the person is “kicked out” of the wedding.
 - iv) Some people compare this to the church “kicking out” non-believers.
 - v) Other commentators compare this to God refusing to let someone in heaven just because he was “religious”.
 - vi) Either way, we are still discussing non-believers.
- e) Going back to my opening theme, notice that when this not-dressed-properly person is questioned about it, “He is silent”.
- i) When we approach God for the wrong reasons (i.e., trying to please him on our own efforts, there is nothing we can say in our defense).
 - ii) God is perfect by definition. A perfect God requires us to be perfect to spend eternity with Him. We become “perfect” by accepting Jesus as a perfect substitution on our behalf. To come to God any other way is to show our lack of perfection. Non-believers who are aware of Jesus will have no excuse for eternity.
 - a) Paul said, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.
 (Romans 1:20, NIV)
12. Verse 13: "Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'
- a) The term “weeping and gnashing of teeth” has already been used three times by Jesus previously in the Gospel of Matthew (ref.: 8:12, 13:42 and 13:50).
 - i) In each of those previous cases, Jesus was talking about eternal hell.
 - ii) My personal view of eternal hell is not a fire pit, but complete darkness. Imagine being deep in a large cave with no light. I think that eternal separation from God is what causes the weeping and the gnashing of teeth in pain.
13. Verse 14: "For many are invited, but few are chosen."
- a) If you want a good balance between “pre-destiny and “free-will” there it is in Verse 14.
 - b) God gives us the free will to choose to be with him for eternity.
 - i) That is the “many are invited” aspect.
 - ii) Our salvation requires us, in our free will to choose to accept God’s free gift of salvation through Jesus.
 - c) God is perfect. A perfect God cannot learn anything or he wouldn’t be perfect. If he cannot learn, he must know all things. Therefore, God knows in advance who will choose to accept Jesus as their Savior. In that sense, all Christians are “chosen” by God. That is the “pre-destiny” aspect of Christianity.
 - d) There is an expression I always liked that applies here: “The river of truth runs between the banks of the two extremes”.
 - i) There are some who are obsessed with the free-will aspect of Christianity.
 - ii) There are some who are obsessed with the pre-destiny aspect of Christianity.
 - iii) Christianity requires both aspects, even though it is difficult to reconcile.
14. Verse 15: Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words.¹⁶ They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. (I’m stopping in the middle of Verse 16).
- a) Notice the Pharisees didn’t go themselves. They sent their own disciples.
 - i) By this time, Jesus would recognize their faces. In order to trap Jesus, they had to send others Jesus would not recognize.

- b) History is a little vague on who are the “Herodians”.
 - i) They were probably Jewish people who were pro-Roman Empire.
 - ii) Remember King Herod ruled over this territory, thus the name “Herodians”.
 - iii) Also remember that King Herod had John the Baptist killed. Herod’s territory did include the Galilee region, but not Jerusalem. That was Pilate’s territory.
 - c) The Pharisees hated Rome and wanted Israel’s independence. They hated Jesus so much they were willing to work with political enemies (The Herodians) in order to trap them.
 - i) Yassar Arafat is famous for the quote, “The enemy of my enemy is my friend”. It is amazing to think what people will do out of their hatred of Jesus.
15. Verse 16b: "Teacher," they said, "we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are.¹⁷ Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"
- a) Notice how these guys tried “buttering up” Jesus before asking the question.
 - i) It is a quick reminder to us to not be so trusting to strangers who compliment us.
 - b) The Pharisees thought they got Jesus in a trap.
 - i) If Jesus says he is in favor of paying the taxes to Caesar (i.e., Roman Empire) than he would be against the Jewish independence.
 - ii) If Jesus says he is against paying the tax, the Pharisees could turn Jesus over to the Romans for being a traitor and someone wanting to overthrow Rome.
 - c) They asked this question in front of Jesus’ followers in order for him to answer publicly.
16. Verse 18: But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me?¹⁹ Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius,²⁰ and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."
- a) First of all, Jesus knew that their compliments were insincere and that they were trying to trap him. Jesus knew that they weren’t sincerely interested in His opinion, which is why Jesus called them hypocrites.
 - b) It is only after pointing out their sin that Jesus dealt with the question itself.
 - c) Jesus gave the answer “Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.”
 - i) Jesus is not giving a down-the-middle or make-both-sides-happy response.
 - ii) Jesus is saying in effect, “I’m not here to overthrow Rome. Yes you the Jews were conquered by Rome. God allowed Rome to rise as a great power and to conquer you for greater purposes than you can comprehend right now. (The spread of Christianity is much easier under one empire and one set of rules!) Because Rome is over you, you must pay tribute to Rome through their tax and give to God of what God asks you to give.
 - iii) Modern translation: Pay your taxes and obey God’s commandments.
 - a) There are Christians who don’t want to pay taxes or part of them because the taxes go to immoral causes. There are things like government-paid-for abortions that I consider abominable. Jesus principle is in effect, “whether you like it or not, this government is over you and you must pay for its service whether you like it or not”.
 - iv) All authority is God-ordained. This is why we pray for our political leaders.
 - a) “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.” (Romans 13:1a, NIV).
 - b) “(Pray) for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. (1st Timothy 2:2, NIV).
17. Verse 22: When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.
- a) My theme of “The silence is deafening” really applies here.
 - i) The silence of those asking the questions shows their defeat in their purpose.
 - ii) You can’t “out-debate” Jesus. He is the final authority in all things.

18. Verse 23: That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question.²⁴ "Teacher," they said, "Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him."²⁵ Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother.²⁶ The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh.²⁷ Finally, the woman died.²⁸ Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?"
- a) When one group couldn't debate Jesus anymore, another one gives it a shot.
 - b) The last group was the religious-conservatives. Now comes the religious liberals.
 - i) The first group, the Pharisees were the bible-literalists.
 - ii) This group, the Sadducees, were the "bible is all symbolic and not literal" types.
 - iii) The Sadducees believed the first five books of God (The "Torah" in Hebrew) were God-inspired as good-moral stories, but they didn't believe the other Old Testament books were God inspired.
 - iv) When Jesus rebukes these guys, Jesus sticks only to the "Torah" to rebuke them.
 - c) In this paragraph the Sadducees were making fun of the idea of the resurrection.
 - i) The Sadducees didn't believe in the concept of the resurrection.
 - ii) Therefore, they made up this story of "seven grooms for one bride" in order to trap Jesus on the concept of marriage and resurrection.
 - iii) The Sadducees were correct in that it is a biblical idea of when a man dies without children, his brother is supposed to take the women and have children in his brother's name. It is not a binding requirement, but if the surviving brother won't do it, he is to be publicly put to shame. (Reference: Deuteronomy 25:5-10).
 - d) God says when two people become married, "they become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).
 - i) Therefore, the Sadducees thought they had Jesus in a "conflict" because they assumed that marriage would continue into the next life (which they didn't believe in, but their rivals, the Pharisees did) and the "7 grooms/1 bride" problem.
19. Verse 29: Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.³⁰ At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.³¹ But about the resurrection of the dead--have you not read what God said to you,³² 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."
- a) First, let's understand just how Jesus rebuked their arguments:
 - i) The key word is in Verse 32 is the word "am".
 - ii) Jesus quotes, "I am the God of Abraham the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"
 - a) This is a correct quote of Genesis 3:6.
 - iii) It is, "I am the God of Abraham" as opposed to "I was the God of Abraham..."
 - iv) If Abraham were dead (not resurrected), the quote would be I was the God".
 - v) Since Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are resurrected, the correct quote is "am the God".
 - b) In Verse 29, Jesus said the Sadducees were in error for 2 things:
 - i) The first was for not knowing their Scriptures.
 - a) The mistake of the Sadducees was not taking the scriptures seriously.
 - b) There are many people who look at the bible as a bunch of good moral stories, but then don't take them as factual and don't take them seriously.
 - c) There are parts that are poetic, but most of the bible is to be taken literally.
 - d) The basic rule of Scripture interpretation is "if the plain sense makes perfect sense, seek no other sense". If God says he is the God of Abraham (as opposed to "was"), then Abraham is still alive in heaven.

- e) I find it interesting that when you read through the New Testament, you do read of Pharisees who became Christians, but you never read of any Sadducees who became Christians.
 - (1) I am convinced it is easier to teach someone about Jesus who takes his or her bible seriously than one who allegorizes the book.
- ii) The second mistake the Sadducees make is not knowing the power of God.
 - (1) The opening verse of the bible is, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1, NIV)
 - (2) If you can “handle” that verse, you can handle the rest of the bible.
 - (3) For example, a God who is capable of creating the heaven and earth is a God that is capable of hearing billions of prayers at once.
 - (a) A God who is capable of creating the heaven and earth is a God that can bring the dead back to life.
 - (b) A God who is capable of creating the heaven and earth can resolve any problem you bring to Him if he so chooses.
- c) Now let's talk a little about life-in-heaven.
 - i) We get a few clues about the next life from these scriptures.
 - ii) The first is that “people will neither marry nor be given in marriage.”
 - a) Does this mean we will have no sex drive, or just no marriage?
 - (1) We don't have an answer, just a question on that one!
 - b) The reason there is no marriage is that, in a sense, we are all “the bride of Christ”. We talked about that concept a few pages back. Our focus in heaven will be upon our relationship with God the Father and our relationship with Jesus.
 - (1) Marriage to anyone else but Jesus is no longer necessary.
 - c) A lot of people worry and wonder about this. Many people have had wonderful terrific marriages and want to spend eternity with their spouses.
 - d) First of all, I believe we are going to have such joy, such peace in heaven for eternity, that we can focus more on God and not our spouses.
 - (1) If this issue is difficult for you, study the last two chapters of the Revelation. It is mostly about our next life. The emphasis is on God's new relationship with people and vice-versa.
 - e) The Mormons interpret this verse as, “you are married for eternity”. They read this verse and say in effect, “Whoever you marry here you are married to for eternity as there is no marriage in heaven”.
 - (1) This is bad interpretation of this verse. I believe Jesus' point is that our relationship in heaven focus on God and man and therefore, male-female marriage isn't necessary. It is not about eternally bound to your spouse.
 - f) If you read through the entire bible, we don't have a lot of information about the next life. The bible spends most of the time dealing with our lives here on earth.
 - (1) I interpret that fact this way, “Here are your instructions (the bible) for life here on earth. Keep your focus on the rewards of heaven, but don't worry about the details. I, God will take care of that, and it will be wonderful. You (us) focus on what I called you to do here and now in this lifetime.”
 - (2) I heard a great comment to the effect of, “God spent 6 days creating the heaven and earth. Jesus has been gone for 2,000 years and said he “went to go prepare a place for us” (John 14:2). If Jesus is taking that long to make us a “place” it must be something special.

- d) One last thing on this topic. The bible clearly teaches that Jesus is the “first to rise from the dead”. This is what is meant by the bible-term “firstfruits”.
- i) “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” (1st Corinthians 15:20, NIV)
 - ii) Critics will say, “If God “is” the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, how could Jesus be the “first” to be in heaven?”
 - a) Jesus himself tells the answer in Luke 16:19-31.
 - b) This is the account of a poor man named Lazarus who is “comforted in the bosom of Abraham.”
 - c) The same story mentions another man who is tormented. There is a “great chasm” (Verse 26) between Lazarus and the tormented man.
 - d) Some people think this is a parable (a fictional story). It is not a fictional story because in all the other parables given by Jesus, there are no actual names given. In this factual account, the names of people are given.
 - e) A point of this story is that there is a “temporary holding place” for those who were saved, prior to Jesus being resurrected. Those same people are now in heaven.
20. Verse 33: When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.
- a) Again, “the silence is deafening in the crowd.”
 - i) Jesus just silenced the Sadducees, as stated in Verse 34.
 - ii) Jesus just taught the importance of taking your Scriptures seriously and how the bible does teach about the resurrection.
 - b) The “crowd” was astonished at this teaching.
 - i) I’m sure there were many in the crowd who heard the Sadducees teaching and the Pharisees teaching and were not sure who was right.
 - ii) Jesus, putting the Sadducees “in their place” with this rebuttal, gave the crowd something to think about.
 - iii) The Pharisees will get their condemnation. We will discuss that in Chapter 23
21. Verse 34: Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together.³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question:³⁶ “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”
- a) The put-down of the Sadducees gave their rivals, the Pharisees “a second wind”.
 - b) The Pharisees thought (wrongly) “Maybe he is one of us, let’s ask him more questions”.
 - c) Reading these verses, one cannot tell if they were asking Jesus this question out of genuine curiosity or if were they trying to trap him.
 - i) The Pharisees were either interested at what Jesus really thought was the greatest commandment or they were trying to get him to take a side in a debate.
 - ii) If one reads through the five books of Moses there are actually hundreds of commandments that Moses gives to the Israelites. The “10 commandments” are something special in that God “hand-wrote” those on stone tablets for everyone to see. The 10 commandments are often considered a summary of all the commandments in those books.
 - a) Orthodox Judaism teaches that there are 613 commandments in those five books. Who am I to argue with that? ☺
 - iii) So here are some Pharisees asking Jesus in effect, “Of the 613, which is #1?”
 - iv) Jesus response is Verse 37.

22. Verse 37: Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment.³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."
- a) If you take all 613 commandments, or even just the 10 commandments, you can categorize them into two groups:
 - i) Our relationship with God (The first 4 of the 10 commandments).
 - ii) Our relationship with other people (The last 6 of the 10 commandments).
 - iii) All of the commandments affect either our relationship with God and/or with other people.
 - iv) With that in mind, let's look at Verse 37.
 - b) Verse 37 says we are to, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."
 - i) This is a quote from Deuteronomy 6:5. It is not part of the "10 commandments."
 - a) Verses 4 and 5 from Deuteronomy Chapter 6 are called the "She-ma" in Hebrew. Together they are two of the most famous verses in Judaism as many Jews recite these two verses together.
 - b) Verse 4 says, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one."
 - (1) By the way, the word for "God" in Verse 4 is "el-o-heem".
 - (2) This is a plural-compound
 - (3) Think of "one" in a plural form like "one group of people".
 - (4) I see it as a clue of the Trinity!
 - ii) Let me give you an analogy that may help you understand Verse 5.
 - a) Think about when you were a teenager and first fell in love with someone. You wanted to know everything there was to know about that person. You wanted to follow them and just be with them. Everything they did was "perfect and magical".
 - b) Now think about the command to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."
 - (1) If you love God that much, all you want to do is focus upon Him, be with him and do what he tells you.
 - (2) All the other commands about our relationship with God will fall into place if we obey this command.
 - (3) I've once heard all the commands of God summarized as "Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength and then do whatever you want". Because if you are doing the first part, (loving God this way) you will naturally want to obey everything else He commands of us.
 - iii) A lot of people wonder, "What did God mean by "heart, soul, mind & strength?""
 - a) Some people use these terms interchangeably.
 - b) It would take awhile to explain the meaning of each one, but many argue (including myself) that they each have a distinct meaning.
 - c) In summary, it starts with God working through us. He works through our inner-being (our heart), affecting how the spirit works within us (our soul), affecting how we think (our mind) and how we act (our strength).

- c) Now lets talk about the command of Verse 39: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”
 - i) This is a quote of Leviticus 19:18.
 - ii) It is similar to the “Golden Rule” taught in “The Sermon on the Mount”:
 - a) “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 7:12, NIV)
 - iii) It sounds so simple. Just treat others as you want others to treat you. That is what Jesus meant by loving your neighbor as yourself.
 - iv) The idea of “loving” is to make them a priority. It is about giving of oneself. It is to give of one’s time and resources to others as you would yourself.
 - v) If you read through all the commands in the Old Testament about our relationship with other people, you realize it is all about “fairness” and treating others well.
 - vi) That is why Jesus quote here in Verse 39 is a good summary for us.
 - d) Here’s something to consider: If Jesus is saying these are the two greatest commandments, why don’t we pray these more often?
 - i) Our ability to obey God’s commandments does not come through self-discipline, but through God working through us.
 - ii) If Jesus says these two are the greatest commandments, I would encourage, say for the next 30 days, to pray for God to help us 1) love him more with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength and 2) to love our neighbor as ourselves.
 - e) I can’t resist sharing a famous story of a Jewish Rabbi named Hillel who was asked to summarize the five books of Moses “while standing on one foot”. You can stand on one foot for a short time, but after awhile you lose your balance. The question was meant to ask to summarize the five books in a few moments.
 - a) Rabbi Hillel didn’t even hesitate. He said, “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah (5 books of Moses). The rest is the commentary on it. Now go and study the rest.”
 - b) Today there are synagogues named after this man.
 - c) Notice the similarity of what he preached and what Jesus taught.
23. Verse 41: While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,⁴² "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" "The son of David," they replied.⁴³ He said to them, "How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him 'Lord'? For he says,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 can he be his son?"
- a) Jesus was done listening to questions. It was time for Jesus to fire back.
 - b) After the audience of Pharisees and Sadducees were silenced, they were now ready to listen to Jesus ask his own questions.
 - i) That is a good thing to remember as a teacher. Sometimes people are not willing to hear what someone else has to say until they get what they have to say off of their minds. Take their questions first, then ask your own.
 - c) In Jewish thought, a father is always superior in stature to a son.
 - i) For example, a great-great-great grandson would be inferior in stature to the great-great-great grandfather.
 - ii) This is Jesus’ point. The promised Messiah is a descendant of David.
 - a) Yet, David called him “Lord”.
 - b) A Jewish father would never call one of his descendants “Lord”.
 - c) Now focus on Verse 44 where Jesus is quoting Psalm 110:1 with the phrase “The Lord said to my Lord”.
 - d) David is saying in this Psalm, “The Lord (God-The-Father) is speaking to my Lord (The Messiah).

- iii) Jesus is asking a very good question. How could David call his “son” Lord, and the Lord be superior to him as a deity?
 - a) Again, notice David calls him “my Lord” referring to the one who rules over me.
 - b) Jesus is trying to show how the Messiah is both a man (son of David) and deity (Lord) at the same time.
 - d) Let me comment on one more phrase Jesus is quoting: Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.
 - i) This is the rest of the Verse 1 of Psalm 110.
 - ii) What does that mean? Does that mean Jesus just sits there until God the Father “takes care” of Jesus enemies?
 - a) Remember that much of the Psalms, and the whole Old Testament for that matter are different predictions about Jesus purpose and ministry.
 - b) I believe this one verse refers to Jesus work at the cross.
 - c) When David wrote this Psalm, the crucifixion and resurrection were hundreds of years in the future.
 - d) From David’s perspective, the idea of “Jesus resting until God takes cares of your enemies” refers to sin itself.
 - (1) God can stand no sin whatsoever. In the Garden of Eden, God “declared war” on Satan and the idea of man’s sinning.
 - (2) In the sense of time and history, Jesus didn’t do “anything” until his appointed time to pay the price for our sins.
 - (3) That is what I believe David meant by “(Jesus) sits here until God takes care of his enemies”. It is a future prediction that the payment for sin would one day be taken care of by Jesus.
24. Verse 46: No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.
 - a) Well, there is that silence again. ☺
 - b) I’ve beaten that point to death, so I won’t go much further.
 - c) Jesus goes on with a scathing indictment of the Pharisees in Chapter 23, but we’ll leave that for the next lesson. With that, let’s wrap this up in prayer.
25. Heavenly Father, We too, when we understand our sinful nature, we too, can only stand in silence before you. We are grateful for providing a way to spend eternity with you, and for that we will be forever grateful. Help us to see others non-saved people with any sort of pious superiority, but as people who need Jesus. Despite our faults and our sinful nature, work through us for your glory so that we can be your witnesses to a dying world. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.