

MATTHEW

Chapter 22

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, 2 “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, 3 and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. 4 Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.”’ 5 But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, 6 while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. 7 The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. 8 Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’ 10 And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests. 11 “But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. 12 And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ 14 For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Jesus graphically portrays God as reaching out to people, bar none, with his inviting grace. God is anything but the *deus absconditus*, a hidden, silent God. Proactively he not only prepares the finest feast but also invites . . . and invites . . . and invites. Thus Jesus signals our accountability to the God who cares enough to search us out, and he welcomes our arrival in the Kingdom with celebration and whistling bells. We need to value these times of worship and celebration. Though our divine services here still bear the stigma of human limitation, they are true foretastes of the eternal banquet. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 4)

All who choose to ignore our accountability to God cheapen God’s grace. In fact grace is supremely costly—it cost his Son! Bonhoeffer wrote: “Grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it cost a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life” (Quoted by Thomas F. Loftus in *Augsburg Sermons, Gospels, Series A*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974, p244). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 4)

We can understand the king’s anger when his servants who carried the invitation were put to death, especially when the final Messenger was’ his own Son. But when the king sends a servant to the “streets and alleys . . . [to] bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame” (Luke’s parallel), we know that God’s grace is truly nondiscriminatory. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 4)

22:1 them. This parable is addressed to the religious leaders of Israel and primarily speaks a word of judgment and warning against them. (CC)

again in parables – Although the son was killed in the previous parable, here he is alive again. As Jesus tells these parables on Tuesday of Holy Week, He is saying that Good Friday will most certainly be followed by Easter Sunday. That point may have gone right over their heads at the time, but After Jesus’ resurrection, when His disciples had the benefit of hindsight, they were able to see things they had missed before. And that is one good reason why we should read the Scriptures over and over again. Nobody gets it all the first time. (PBC)

This parable repeats three important themes from the previous one (21:33-46), specifically Jesus’ divine Son-ship, Israel’s persistent rejection of its prophets, and the inclusion of Gentiles in God’s kingdom. (TLSB)

A vivid description of the elaborate preparations for an Oriental wedding-feast, to point a moral in the matter of the kingdom of God. For Christ always had a definite purpose in telling His parables, in most cases to teach the proper qualification for becoming a member of His great kingdom (Kretzmann)

22:2-7 Jesus is offering stern truths about the reign of God in Israel at the present time with his ministry underway, as some have followed him and some now are opposing and hating him. Here in Jerusalem, as Jesus moves toward the cross and the empty tomb, his enemies have come against him in open and unrepentant opposition. How should this rejection of God’s reign rightly be understood? The parable answers the question. (CC)

22:2 *kingdom of heaven* – *hōmoiōthē hē basileia tōn ouranōn*, “the kingdom of heaven may be compared to.” Only the third of the three consecutive parables of this discourse (also Mt 21:28–32, 33–44) begins with the familiar formula, but they are all descriptive of the kingdom that has come in Christ. Jesus presents a similar parable in Lk 14:16–24, but it is clearly a separate occasion and delivers a somewhat different message. The Luke parable is told on a Sabbath (14:1) and presumably earlier in Jesus’ ministry; this one is spoken in the middle of Holy Week, probably on Tuesday. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

wedding feast – A wedding is a great cause for celebration and joining together of family and friends. When royalty is involved, the celebration becomes a national event because of the bond between the people and their head. As in the previous parable, the identity of the characters is scarcely veiled: God the Father is the king, and Jesus is the son. The Jewish hearers would have been quite familiar with the image of God as King (Ex 15:18; Is 40:10; Ps 24; 29:10; etc.) and prophecies of the Messiah/Christ as God’s Son (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:12). Just a day or two previously, during His triumphal entry on Palm Sunday, the crowds had acclaimed Jesus as “Son of David” (Mt 21:9), a title that combines the concept of a king (David) and his son – the Son, who is also David’s Lord (Ps 110). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 4)

The wedding feast of celebration might last 7 days (Jud 14:12) or even 14 days (Tobit 8:20). Certainly it was quite an honor to be invited, and the host would have made lavish and expensive preparations. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 4)

The provisions of God for the happiness of men are most abundant and free, and His invitations to them to come and receive according to their wants, are most urgent and sincere. (Concordia Bible)

Jesus’ ministry already now is manifesting the great messianic feast and even more remarkable, should be understood as an eschatological fulfillment of the OT theme of God as Israel’s Husband and Israel as Yahweh’s bride. The feast is a wedding feast. As was foreseen by perhaps

no one in the Second Temple period until John the Baptizer, the presence of the Messiah is, at the same time, the presence of Israel's God and Husband. Jesus, the Messiah, is already now the Bridegroom. Those who oppose Jesus, then, are also opposing and rejecting God's invitation to his wedding banquet, that is, God's invitation to be his bride, his people. (CC)

Isaiah 25:6-9 compares the messianic age to a great feast hosted by God. That imagery along with Jesus' self-identification as the Bridegroom in Mt. 9:15, makes it plain in the parable the father represents God and Jesus is the Bridegroom. (TLSB)

22:3 *he sent other servants* – At the appointed time, servants were sent out to announce that fact to those that had received an invitation, probably the princes, the rich and powerful people of the kingdom. (Kretzmann)

who were invited – This second invitation seems in accord with Eastern custom (Esther 6:14). We are told that among the distinctions of the inhabitants of Jerusalem is mentioned that none of them went to a feast till the invitation had been given twice. The Apostles called those who had already been invited.

The invitation should not have been a surprise. Those to whom the slaves were sent had already been called; had they never read the Scriptures (cf. 21:42). (CC)

Those invited represent the people of Israel. Inexplicably, they refuse to come to the banquet prepared for them. (TLSB)

they would not come – Throughout the Old Covenant and especially when Christ came, God, in Christ, humbled himself deeply and treated the Jews most courteously in the Gospel. But, they refused to come.

On the level of the story, in refusing the king's invitation, they expressed a deadly insult. The sorts of reasons given in the parable (22:5) are no excuse, and the exaggerated and deadly response of the rest who had been invited (22:6) is an almost unthinkable act of shaming the king and his son. To repeat for emphasis: in all of this, the culpability of those who refuse the invitation consists in their dishonoring and insulting their king and his son. (CC)

22:4 *again* – Note that *palin* occurred in verse 1. It showed Jesus' great patience. Under ordinary circumstances a king would certainly not have extended another invitation after the first and second had been rejected.

Other servants – More Apostles, missionaries and evangelists.

I have prepared my dinner – Wholly God's doing. A meal like this was the consummation of the spiritual marriage.

My oxen and fat calves – Compare the sumptuous fare laid out at this feast with the fare prophesied in Is 25. (TLSB)

He sent other servants with a more urgent message for the invited guests. They are given the very words to commend the feast, to stimulate desire for its offering. The attention of the invited guests should be called to the fact that the midday meal, with which the festivities began, was even now fully ready for them. The oxen and the fatted rams had been slaughtered and cooked,

nothing of the usual delights of the table was missing. The wealth of the king had overlooked nothing in the endeavor to honor both himself and his guests. (Kretzmann)

22:5-6 Somme of those invited to the feast ignore the second invitation. Others greet these messengers with violence. Such refusals represent Israel's reaction toward the prophets sent to them. The cause for this contempt for the Word is not God's foreknowledge, but the perverse human will. The human will rejects or perverts the means and instrument of the Holy Spirit, which God offers it through the call. It resists the Holy Spirit, who wants to be effective, and who works through the Word. (TLSB)

22:5 *paid no attention* – Showed a total lack of interest.

Here was a case of studied insolence and insult. They were indifferent to the urgent call, they paid absolutely no attention to it, in the majority of cases. (Kretzmann)

farm...business – Both of these groups are sophisticated people of earthly means. The point is that they are sunken in mere material and earthly matters, materialists who care not about their own souls.

The fault is not with the king, but with the inexplicably unwilling guests! They greet the invitation with apathy: *ameleo*, “to neglect, be unconcerned, disregard,” a word used elsewhere for people spurning salvation (Heb 2:3) or failing to use their spiritual gift (1 Tim 4:14).

22:6 *rest seized his servants* – This group is not just indifferent but hostile. We think of John the Baptist, Stephen and James. The book of Acts is not only an account of the Apostles preaching justification by faith but also an account of how the people treated God's messengers with violence and death.

But a few of the invited guests were not satisfied with merely indicating their disapproval of the king and their contempt for the wedding-feast in this fashion. They vented their spite on the messengers. Having laid hold on them, they treated them with every mark of contempt, and finally killed them. These were acts of open rebellion, naturally followed by war. (Kretzmann)

killed – *apekteinan*, “killed.” In interpreting a parable, close attention should always be given to any element that does not seem to fit the story or illustration. It may be understandable that some invited guests would be indifferent to a gracious invitation, but it would appear absurd for them to kill the servants delivering the word. Therefore, Jesus' inclusion of this misfit element is intentional and highly emphatic. In the previous parable, it was specifically the son who was murdered (21:37–39). Here again Jesus is warning the Jewish leaders in no uncertain terms to cease and desist from their murderous plans—which are indeed still aimed at the Son. (Another “misfit element” will occur in v 13.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

22:7 To apply specific referents to characters and actions in this first part of the parable, we can work backward from this verse. In light of the temple incident in 21:12-17, Jesus' lament over Jerusalem in 23:37-39, and the first half of the Eschatological Discourse (24:1-35), it is crystal clear that 22:7 in the parable predicts that Jerusalem will be destroyed; this coming destruction should be understood as divine judgment. This will come because the Jewish religious leaders have, by and large, rejected God's Son and the reign of God present in his deeds and his words. (CC)

burned their city.† A common military practice. (CSB)

Anticipates the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 during the first Jewish revolt. (TLSB)

Though men have the power and the disposition, yet they have no right to reject the invitations of God, or to stay away from Him and perish. It is a great dishonor to Him, as well as a great wrong to themselves. (Concordia Bible)

22:8 *wedding feast is ready* – God did not abandon the marriage-feast of his Son. Man’s indifference toward the Gospel or even his destruction of God’s messengers in no way inhibits or stops the process of the Gospel. In fact it is the other way around. Think on that when you consider all your labor in vain.

Not worthy – Faith in the promises of God makes a man deserving. Rejection makes him unworthy.

Their steadfast refusal to accept the invitation disqualified them. (TLSB)

22:9 *go* – poreuesthe reminds us of Matthew 28:19. It is a present imperative referring to the whole NT era.

This expression of divinely extravagant grace must not be misinterpreted. Yes, the parable proclaims a gracious reign of God that will be offered to all the nations in the generations to come. (CC)

main roads – diedzsdous has received a variety of translations: Highways, main highways, where roads leave the city, street corners, thoroughfares, main streets, crossroad, main thoroughfares. All of these get at it in one way or another. It means “where people are congregations.”

Representing the offering of the gospel to the Gentiles and people of all descriptions. (Concordia Bible)

as many as you find – Time was pressing; great hurry was demanded. So they should go out on the highways, to the place where there is a crossing over of roads, either a crossroads from which the roads radiate in every direction, or a place near the gates where the roads from all directions *ran together*. (Kretzmann)

22:10 *servants went out* – The turning point came at the time of Pentecost. From that point on, no distinction between Jew and Gentile was to be made.

Good and bad – Parables in Mt repeatedly depict the Kingdom as including “bad people” or hypocrites (cf 13:24–30, 36–43, 47–50). In the end, however, there is always a separation of the true and false believers. (TLSB)

pantas . . . ponērous te kai agathous, “all . . . both bad and good.” The emphasis is on the gracious and universal invitation, rather than on anything—even the faith—of those who are invited. Some will prove to be without faith (vv 11–13). Compare those who are invited in Lk 14:21–23. There, the lowly and helpless quality of the invitees is indeed in view. In the Lukan passage, Jesus is specifically responding to the self-exaltation of the dinner guests who are hearing his parable (Lk 14:7, 12–14). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

All of the people who are invited to the king's banquet are unworthy of His invitation. (PBC)

Every sinner who receives this invitation in penitent faith must confess together with Martin Luther, "I believe that I cannot by my own things or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel. (PBC)

wedding hall. Representation of the earthly Church. (TLSB)

22:11 *not wearing wedding clothes.* † It has been conjectured that it may have been the custom for the host to provide the guests with wedding garments. This would have been necessary for the guests at this banquet in particular, for they were brought in directly from the streets (vv. 9–10). The failure of the man in question to avail himself of a wedding garment was therefore an insult to the host, who had made the garments available. To come without the wedding garment is to despise the grace of the king, an act which invites judgment. (CSB)

Israelites expected invited guests to wear festive wedding garments, which the host could provide. Thus, this fellow's failure to dress in appropriate clothing, which was freely given to him, offends the host. This garment signifies the righteousness of God, which covers our sin (cf Is 61:10; Gal 3:27). (TLSB)

This man was there deliberately dishonoring the king and his son. Like the initial group of those who had been invited, this man deemed the wedding feast only something to be treated lightly. (CC)

The garment is a gift from God. Is 61:10 uses wedding imagery and speaks of God clothing His people in garments of salvation. Eph 5:26-27 describes Christ washing His bride to make her holy and spotless, and in Baptism we are clothed with Christ (Gal 3:27). Rev. 19:8 says of Christ's bride, "Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints." As in Jesus' two previous parables, good works are the fruit of faith. Good works are made possible solely by the grace of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 4)

It was customary for the man who made a wedding feast, to provide wedding garments for those whom he invited. If they would not come, or if they did come but would not put on the wedding garment, it was a great dishonor to the master of the feast. By this incident of the parable, our Lord shows that an outward acceptance of His gospel is not enough. We may join ourselves to the number of His visible followers; but if our souls have not the wedding garment of faith, love, and holiness, we shall be cast out. (Concordia Bible)

The man who was not wearing wedding clothes calls to mind the traditional prayer of preparation for Holy Communion, Strip of from us the spotted garments of our flesh, and of our own righteousness, and adorn us with the garments of the righteousness that Thou hast purchased with Thy blood. (Notice how this imagery seems to be drawn from Revelation 7:13-14.) (PBC)

22:12 *get in here* – This does not mean that judgment will take place inside of heaven. In application Jesus is talking about a hypocrite. He seemed to accept the invitation but did not in reality.

Was speedless – Without imputed righteousness a man will be muzzled on Judgment Day.

He knew that he was inexcusable. (Concordia Bible)

A time is coming when God will examine into every man's character, and when those who have trusted to their own righteousness, without submission to or acceptance of the righteousness of Christ will, with hypocrites and the openly vicious, be cast into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Concordia Bible)

22:13 *bind him head and foot* – This signifies the total loss of freedom, total helplessness, imprisonment, and the utter opposite of being a guest at a wedding-feast.

throw him outside, into the darkness ... weeping ... gnashing of teeth. † Expressions depicting severe punishment. Whereas the first part of the parable (vv. 2–7) spoke of God's rejection of national Israel (cf. 21:43–45), the latter part (vv. 11–13) deals with the response of the individual. The wedding garment no doubt speaks of the righteousness that God, the gracious host, provides for all who respond to his invitation. God issues an undeserved invitation to undeserving people, and in addition provides the righteousness the invitation demands. (CSB)

Jesus is not talking about an earthly party but about salvation. The exclusion and punishment is a description of hell. (TLSB)

dēsantes autou . . . eis to skotos to exōteron, “bind him . . . into the outer darkness.” As in v 6 earlier, Jesus steps out of the natural situation of the parable. A guest, even such a rude one, would not be bound “hand and foot,” and there is no “outer darkness” surrounding any ordinary wedding hall. Jesus abandons the illustration for, instead, a chilling return to reality. Hell is no parable! *ekei*, “there.” Not simply continuing the previous sentence with an adverbial subordinate clause (“ . . . where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”). It begins a new sentence emphatically! “There! (In that place!) are unspeakable terrors!” An English translation could read, “*There* there will be weeping . . .” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

The darkness without illuminated banquet hall. The banqueting hall represents heaven with its joys; the outer darkness, hell with its anguish. (Concordia Bible)

22:14 *many ... invited ... few ... chosen.* † God's call, his invitation, goes out to all Israel (v. 3) and to others, good and bad (vv. 8–10); but his grace working through his Word achieves its goal only in the *few* whose response to God's invitation marks them as God's (CSB)

Not every seed that is sown springs up and bears fruit (13:3-9). “Few” here, in combination with and in contradistinction to “many,” probably does not have a numerical sense of “not very many.” Rather, “few” simply contrasts with “all.” Jesus is not teaching here that only an extremely small number of people will be finally saved. (CC)

polloi . . . eisin klētoi, oligoi . . . eklektoi, “many are called, . . . few are chosen.” Also crucial in understanding a parable is any commentary or interpretation Jesus himself gives. The parable is now complete; the imagery is over. Jesus gives us the point: God's grace is for everyone—the Jews who were on the original guest list and spurned the Son when he finally came, those who heard the invitation and yet insisted on coming in the rags of their own works and goodness, the good and the bad. But only those who receive God's grace as it is, complete and unique, to be received by faith, will enjoy the eternal celebration. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

chosen, his elect. (CSB)

There are many hypocrites in the visible Christian Church. Every hearer must examine himself.

None would accept the gracious invitations of the gospel, and be for ever blessed, if God had not from the beginning chosen them to salvation, through the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth. While those who reject Christ and are lost owe their destruction wholly to themselves, those who are saved are indebted for salvation to the riches of grace. (Concordia Bible)

Many of those called into God's kingdom miss out because they refuse to respond to the invitation properly – in faith. This does not mean that God is unwilling to save everybody. But the reason some are not saved is as follows: They do not listen to God's Word at all. (TLSB)

22:1–14 Though God earnestly invites all to His Son's feast, some refuse to accept His invitation and so fail to enjoy its richness. Coming from a long line of believers does not guarantee anyone a place in God's kingdom. Ingratitude and presumption ever threaten to lead us away. Though we in no way deserve mercy, the Gospel earnestly invites us to come and join the Lord in His eternal heavenly banquet. • Heavenly Father, thank You for preparing a table before us in the presence of our enemies and graciously calling us to dwell in Your house forever. Amen. (TLSB)

Paying Taxes to Caesar

15 Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. 16 And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances.] 17 Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" 18 But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? 19 Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. 20 And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" 21 They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." 22 When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.

22:15–17 The Pharisees were ardent nationalists, opposed to Roman rule, while the hated Herodians, as their name indicates, supported the Roman rule of the Herods. Now, however, the Pharisees enlisted the help of the Herodians to trap Jesus in his words. After trying to put him off guard with flattery, they sprang their question: "Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" (v. 17). If he said "No," the Herodians would report him to the Roman governor and he would be executed for treason. If he said "Yes," the Pharisees would denounce him to the people as disloyal to his nation. (PBC)

Jesus arrives in Jerusalem to fulfill his mission, right on God's time, as the spotless Lamb of God. Matthew relays a succession of three interrogations of Jesus by the Pharisees and Sadducees (15–22, 23–33, 34–40) trying to find some fault in him. None was found. Through these three examinations, Matthew shows that Jesus is the spotless Lamb, now examined and ready (Ex 12:3–6) for the sacrifice on behalf of all. Jesus ends the examination by asking his questioners in vv 41–46 to interpret the question of Psalm 110 regarding the Messiah as David's son (true man) and David's Lord (true God). They could not or would not answer. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 4)

There is an old saying that politics makes strange bedfellows. Here the Pharisees and the Herodians display a common hatred for Jesus that overshadows their sharp disagreements with each other. (PBC)

22:15 *went* – *proeuthentes* implies that the Pharisees had heard everything Jesus said from 21:24 to 22:14, but it had left them cold and heartless.

Plotted how to entangle him – *pagideuw* occurs only here in the NT. It is metaphorical for trapping game. That has to be done stealthily, without the animal's or bird's awareness.

Once again, Jesus' adversaries set a trap for Him, by means of a trick question. (TLSB)

sumbouvlion e[labon o{pw" aujto;n pagideuvswn. The NIV's "laid plans to trap him" does not fully convey the insidiousness of the more literal "took council how they might catch him." The motivation for the question that will be put to Jesus is pure evil. The Pharisees want nothing more or less than to trap him. The only question is how it might be done. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 4)

22:16 *their disciples*. Just as Jesus had disciples, so also did other famous religious figures, such as John the Baptist (9:14; 11:2) and, in this case, the Pharisees. (TLSB)

It would have been humiliating to a degree for them to appear with the Herodians, whom they despised and antagonized. They sent their disciples instead. (PBC)

with the Herodians –The Herodians are mentioned just two other times in the New Testament: in Mark's parallel account of this event (Mk 12:13) and in Mk 3:6, where, in reaction to Jesus' healing of a man with the shriveled hand, "the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus." The Pharisees, with their devotion to the traditions and laws of the Jews, were no friends of the Herodian party, which represented Roman authority, but the trap required a threat from that quarter too. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 4)

we know that you are true – The Pharisees would not come themselves, but would send a group of their keenest students together with the Herodians, who this time might be expected to come before him without arousing in him a suspicion of sinister motives on their part. The impression which they evidentially designed to make was that a dispute had occurred between them and they now desired to settle it by referring the matter to an authority such as Jesus was. We must always remember that the devil is a liar and the father of lies.

Our text, the first interrogation, begins with disciples of the Pharisees and their political and theological opponents, the Herodians, "buttering-up" Jesus with smooth words about being a man of integrity and truth. The description is true. But they speak this truth without conviction, showing themselves as hypocrites, mere actors with hidden motives. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 4)

not swayed by appearances. Excessive and insincere flattery that frames this question is intended to disarm Jesus and set Him up for a fall. (TLSB)

22:17 *tell us then* –The trap is clearly explained by Luther: "Does he say no, then the servants of Herod are present and will put him to death as a revolutionist and as one who sets himself against the Roman government. Does he say yes, then he will speak against the independence of the

Jewish people, and we will excite the people against him. For the Jews wish to be a free people, and to have their own king” (Martin Luther, *The Church Postils* [Grand Rapids: Baker], 5:295). Though their trap is unsuccessful, they will, in fact, accuse him before Pilate: “He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar” (Lk 23:2). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 4)

Pay taxes to Caesar or not. This tax was levied directly by Roman authority in Judea and had perhaps been a contributing cause to social unrest and violence a generation before. (CC)

22:18 *aware of their malice* – It plainly shows that Jesus divinity enabled his humanity to be omniscient.

22:19-20 Coin minted by Rome for paying this tax bore the image of Tiberius Caesar and identified him as “son of the divine Augustus.” Ironically, the question was put to Jesus, the true Son of God. The fact that they possessed this coin tacitly acknowledged Caesar’s rule. (TLSB)

22:19 *they brought him* – This means that they had none on their person but had to go the money-changers in the Court of the Gentiles to get this coin.

denarius. The common Roman coin of that day. On one side was the portrait of Emperor Tiberius and on the other the inscription in Latin: “Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of the divine Augustus.” The coin was issued by Caesar and was used for paying tax to him. (CSB)

22:20 *whose likeness* – The coin does not merely resemble Caesar’s face and name but represents his face and name. Where the coin goes, there goes Caesar, in this case.

eijkwvn is here rendered “portrait” (NIV) or “likeness” (NASB, ESV, RSV), but “image” (KJV, NKJV) suggests richer implications. The image on the coin is that of Caesar, but before Jesus’ questioners stands, in the flesh, “the image [*eijkwvn*] of the invisible God” (Col 1:15). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 4)

Caesar’s “inscription,” *ejpigraphv*, is also on the coin. Above the “image of the invisible God” on the cross will be the “inscription,” *ejpigraphv*, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 4)

22:21 *things that are Caesar’s* – Jesus here distinguishes the two realms—the civil and the heavenly—under which all believers live. Though our first allegiance is always to God (Ac 5:29), we are also bound to obey the legitimate civil authorities God has established (Rm 13:1–7). Luther: “It is the duty and obligation of those who participate in this earthly regime to administer law and punishment, to maintain the distinctions that exist among ranks and persons, to manage and distribute property.... But the Gospel does not trouble itself with these matters. It teaches about the right relation of the heart to God” (AE 21:108). (TLSB)

to God what is God’s. In distinguishing clearly between Caesar and God, Jesus also protested against the false and idolatrous claims made on the coins (see previous note). (CSB)

22:22 *left him* – They left him alone and in a sense they had set a trap for Jesus, but had fallen into it themselves.

On Tuesday He tells the Pharisees to pay taxes to Caesar, and on Friday they haul Him before Pilate and say, “We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king” (Luke 23:2). (PBC)

22:15–22 Jesus’ followers owe loyalty and obedience not only to Him, but also to the human rulers that God Himself has established. Though Christians may be tempted to avoid taxes and shirk civic responsibilities, they must “render to Caesar.” Civil authority and good governmental leaders are beneficial means whereby God blesses us. • “Thou who art ever nigh, Guarding with watchful eye, To Thee aloud we cry: God save the State!” Amen. (LSB 965:2) (TLSB)

Sadducees ask about the Resurrection

23 The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question, **24** saying, “Teacher, Moses said, ‘If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.’ **25** Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to his brother. **26** So too the second and third, down to the seventh. **27** After them all, the woman died. **28** In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her.” **29** But Jesus answered them, “**You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. 31 And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: 32 ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.**” **33** And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.

22:24 *Moses told us.* Jesus quoted from the Pentateuch when arguing with the Sadducees, since those books had special authority for them. The reference (Dt 25:5–6) is to the levirate law (from Latin *levir*, “brother-in-law”), which was given to protect the widow and guarantee continuance of the family line. (CSB)

Sadducees held only the five Books of Moses to be authoritative. Accordingly, they choose a Mosaic passage (Dt 25:5–6) as the basis for a hypothetical question. (TLSB)

22:25–28 Sadducees’ drawn-out question is absurd. Who can imagine a woman being widowed by seven men, much less seven brothers? (TLSB)

22:28 By asking such a far-fetched question, the Sadducees mock belief in the resurrection. (TLSB)

22:29 Jesus immediately exposes their hypocrisy. They ask such a thing because they fail to believe in God’s power to raise the dead. (TLSB)

22:30 Jesus’ point is that earthly marriages are no longer binding once one partner dies. Cf Rm 7:1–3. (TLSB)

like angels. Comparison. Believers do not become angels after death. (TLSB)

22:33 The crowd’s astonished reaction emphasizes the brilliance of Jesus’ scriptural interpretation. (TLSB)

22:23–33 Jesus vindicates Israel’s resurrection hope by masterfully interpreting the Scriptures given them through Moses. Dismissing the bodily resurrection denies the Lord, who promises to

raise us from the dead. The God who promised to bring life and immortality to light has fulfilled this promise by raising His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. • “He lives and grants me daily breath; He lives, and I shall conquer death; He lives my mansion to prepare; He lives to bring me safely there.” Amen. (LSB 461:7) (TLSB)

The Greatest Commandment

34 But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. 35 And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” 37 And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

22:34 *Pharisees got together* – After Jesus trumped the Sadducees and their trick question (vv. 23-33), the Pharisees gathered together (literally, “synagogue”) to have another go at Jesus. (TLSB)

The Pharisees were no doubt delighted to see that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, but they did not hesitate to ask Jesus another question themselves. Their sinful pride blinded them to the fact that Jesus could also silence them just as He had the Sadducees. So those who do not learn from the mistakes of others are condemned to repeat them. (PCB)

When Matthew tells us that the Pharisees “got together,” he uses exactly the same Greek phrase that we find in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT) at Psalm 2:2, where it says, “The rulers gather together against the Lord and His Anointed One.” It is pertinent that only two verses later the psalmist tells us, “The one enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.” Man proposes, but God disposes. (PBC)

22:35 *a lawyer* – This was an expert in religious laws of the Jews, in modern terms, a biblical scholar. (TLSB)

22:36 *great commandment* – God had given the Israelites a great variety of laws, including moral, ceremonial, and civil. Jesus’ interrogators asks which of these was the most important. (TLSB)

Perhaps it is not immediately clear how this question is designed to test Jesus. Saint Jerome was perceptive enough to see that all of God’s commandments are equally great. No matter how insignificant it may appear to us, whatever God commands is great because He is God. Thus, if Jesus elevates one commandment above another, He will be exposed as a liberal who does not esteem all of God’s Law as highly as He should. But in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had already asserted that neither the smallest letter nor the least stroke of a pen would by any means disappear from the Law (Matthew 5:17-20).

22:37, 39 *Love*. The Greek verb is not *phileo*, which expresses friendly affection, but *agapao*, the commitment of devotion that is directed by the will and can be commanded as a duty. (CSB)

First recorded in Dt 6:5, where it follows the great Shema of Israel: “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Dt. 6:4). (TLSB)

Significantly, Jesus' answer is thoroughly traditional. Luther says, "But you may say: Oh, it is utterly impossible for a person to keep these two commandments. Yes, it is impossible for you to keep or perform them. You cannot do it; God must do it in you, for Him it is possible." (TLSB)

22:37 *with all your heart ... soul ... mind.* With your whole being. The Hebrew of Dt 6:5 has "heart ... soul ... strength," but some manuscripts of the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT) add "mind." Jesus combined all four terms in Mk 12:30. (CSB)

22:39 This is found in Lv 19:18, amid that book's "holiness code." (TLSB)

22:40 *the Law and the Prophets.* The entire OT. (CSB)

Along with a majority of rabbis of His day, Jesus sees these twin commandments at the heart of the OT revelation. In contrast to Jewish ceremonial laws, which Christ fulfilled and suspended, these moral commandments remain binding. (TLSB)

22:34–40 Jesus avoids another trap set by His opponents, correctly identifying love for God and for neighbor as the two main concerns of the divine Commandments. Among our many sins, none is more grievous than our failure to love God above all else. Thankfully, God does not respond to our selfishness by reciprocating. Instead, He gives us the greatest gift: His only-begotten Son. • "Living God, Your almighty power is made known chiefly in showing mercy and pity. Grant us the fullness of Your grace to lay hold of Your promises and live forever in Your presence; through Jesus Christ." Amen. (*LSB Altar Book*, p 835) (TLSB)

Whose Son Is the Christ?

41 Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, **42** saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." **43** He said to them, "How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, **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 is he his son?" **46** And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

22:42 *whose son is he* – We miss the point if we see Jesus' question as nothing more than tit-for-tat. His is a serious question, and an honest answer would bring His opponents to a correct understanding of Him whom they are opposing. (PBC)

22:43 *the Spirit calls him* – When Jesus quotes the Psalms, (110:1) He is quoting the hymnbook of the Jews. There is an old saying that the hymnal is lay theology. As the liturgy and the hymns are repeated year after year, they embed themselves in the minds and hearts of the worshipers. (PBC)

Jesus simply shows that the Holy Spirit inspired David's words (cf 1Pt 1:10–12; 2Tm 3:16) and the heavenly Father applied them to Him. (TLSB)

It is typical of Jesus to mention the inspiration of the Scriptures in passing rather than making a point of it. (He does the same thing in John 10:34–38.) Jesus simply takes it for granted that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. Instead of laboring to establish the authority of Scripture, Jesus simply quotes it. In his typically colorful way, Martin Luther said that trying to

use human reason to defend the Word of God is like a soldier using his bare head to defend his sword. After all, the Word of God is “the sword of the Spirit” (Eph 6:17). (PBC)

So when David, speaking by the Spirit, calls Jesus “Lord,” we see another illustration of Paul’s teaching. “No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3). Martin Luther comments: “The Holy Spirit wants to preach only Jesus Christ: the poor Holy Spirit doesn’t know anything else.” So the Spirit teaches David and David teaches us, that the promised Son of David is also David’s Lord. The mystery of the God-man is right there in the OT hymnal, the psalms. (PBC)

22:44 *right hand* – As Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, He declared Himself to be the long-awaited Messiah, but He did so in the humblest manner, riding upon a donkey – and a borrowed donkey at that. But now, as He puts this question to the Pharisees He makes the highest claims for Himself as the Messiah. He will sit not on the throne of David but at the right hand of God. The Pharisees expected the Messiah to reestablish the golden age of David and Solomon, to cast off the Roman yoke and put an end to the hated tax. But Jesus sees the glory of the Messiah in the fact that He is David’s Lord, and that in an act of divine condescension He is willing to become also David’s son. (PBC)

22:46 *from that day* – After Monday of Holy Week, Jesus’ opponents no longer challenged Him publicly. Reduced to silence, they continued plotting against Him in secret. (TLSB)

22:41–46 Jesus’ authoritative interpretation of the OT proves that the Messiah is not merely human but also divine. While some people accept His humanity, only those who acknowledge Him as Savior and God have the certain hope of salvation. Jesus Christ, God’s eternal Son, descended from heaven, assumed our flesh, suffered, died, and rose again, that we might share in His glory. • “Beautiful Savior, Lord of the nations, Son of God and Son of Man! Glory and honor, Praise, adoration Now and forevermore be Thine!” Amen. (LSB 537:4) (TLSB)