

Text: Matthew 22:23-23:39

Section 1

*23*On that day some Sadducees (who say there is no resurrection) came to Jesus and questioned Him, *24*asking, "Teacher, Moses said, 'IF A MAN DIES HAVING NO CHILDREN, HIS BROTHER AS NEXT OF KIN SHALL MARRY HIS WIFE, AND RAISE UP CHILDREN FOR HIS BROTHER.' *25*"Now there were seven brothers with us; and the first married and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother; *26*so also the second, and the third, down to the seventh. *27*"Last of all, the woman died. *28*"In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had married her." *29*But Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not understanding 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*"But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: *32*'I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living." *33*When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at His teaching. (Matthew 22:23-33)

The Sadducees were a Jewish sect that was essentially materialist. Besides God Himself, they believed that the physical world was all that existed, that Man did not possess an eternal soul that lived on beyond physical death. To maintain this belief, however, they had to deny much of the Old Testament Scriptures. Even Job, who might have even preceded the giving of the Law, was aware not only of the perseverance of the soul, but of the eventual resurrection of the body.

**25"As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives,
And at the last He will take His stand on the earth.
26"Even after my skin is destroyed,
Yet from my flesh I shall see God;
27Whom I myself shall behold,
And whom my eyes will see and not another.
My heart faints within me! (Job 19:25-27)**

The Sadducees got around such issues as this by not recognizing any Scriptures except the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament. Jesus knew this, and wisely crafted an answer to their challenge from the Book of Exodus. The Book of Genesis also speaks about life beyond this world, telling us about Enoch, who was taken to be with God. While this doesn't speak specifically to life after physical death, I do think it is telling that the Word says that God "took" Enoch—if there is nothing for Man beyond the physical world, for God to "take" Enoch would be for Him to annihilate Enoch. Instead, we understand that Enoch was taken, body and soul, to be with God.

24Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him. (Genesis 5:24)

In spite of the Sadducees' assertion, the Bible is plain in stating that the soul remains after physical death, and will ultimately face judgment before God. All that do not repent of sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ will suffer everlasting torment, but the Good News—the Reason we celebrate at this time of year—is that everyone that will repent and believe on Him will be saved from this punishment and receive everlasting life.

27And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, 28so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. (Hebrews 9:27-28)

23For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

13for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." (Romans 10:13)

Section 2

*34*But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. *35*One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing 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 foremost commandment. *39*"The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'
40"On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:34-40)

Jesus says that we are to love God first and foremost, and with all of our being. Secondly, we are to love others as ourselves. Then, He wisely says that *"On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."* Take just the Ten Commandments as an example:

1Then God spoke all these words, saying, **2**"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. **3**"You shall have no other gods before Me. **4**"You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. **5**"You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, **6**but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. **7**"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. **8**"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. **9**"Six days you shall labor and do all your work, **10**but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. **11**"For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy. **12**"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. **13**"You shall not murder. **14**"You shall not commit adultery. **15**"You shall not steal. **16**"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. **17**"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor." (Exodus 20:1-17)

Here we have four commandments (No Other Gods, No Idols, No Taking His Name in Vain, Remember the Sabbath) that speak to our relationship with and service to God, and six more (Honor Father and Mother, No Murder, No Adultery, No Stealing, No False Witness, No Coveting) that speak of our relations with one another. In other words, the first four can be taken to fall under the Great Commandment, and the last six under the Second Greatest Commandment. The entire Law of Moses can be "reduced" to some extent to one of these two commandments. Therefore, Jesus' answer was a wise one, indeed.

Section 3

*41*Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question: *42*"What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?" They said to Him, "The son of David." *43*He said to them, "Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying, *44*"THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET"? *45*"If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?" *46*No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question. (Matthew 22:41-46)

The Pharisees were experts in the Law, and quickly answered Jesus to the effect that Messiah was to be descended from David. They said rightly, for the Scripture plainly said that Messiah would be a descendant of King David.

1Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,
And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.
2The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him,
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The spirit of counsel and strength,
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
3And He will delight in the fear of the LORD,
And He will not judge by what His eyes see,
Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;
4But with righteousness He will judge the poor,
And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;
And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.
5Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins,
And faithfulness the belt about His waist. (Isaiah 11:1-5)

However, the same Scriptures also plainly stated that Messiah was to be an earthly Incarnation of God Himself (who happened to be physically descended from David).

6For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

**7There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)**

In an incomprehensibly miraculous way, Jesus is the Eternal God and Creator, yet was born into this world as a descendant of David. He refers to Himself as such in the last chapter of Revelation.

16"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." 17The Spirit and the bride say, "Come " And let the one who hears say, "Come " And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. 18I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; 19and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book. (Revelation 22:16-19)

I wanted to read this entire passage because of the threat found in verses 18-19. Jesus promised a strict penalty for those that alter the Revelation given to John. In the following passage, He mentions the “unbreakableness” of the Scripture as a whole.

32Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?" 33The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God." 34Jesus answered them, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I SAID, YOU ARE GODS'? 35"If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), 36do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? (John 10:32-36)

The Pharisees were experts in the Scriptures, yet they were often guilty of “picking and choosing” which doctrines to believe, teach, and practice. They were content to correctly identify Messiah as the Son of David, yet they conveniently ignored writings that refer to Him as the Incarnate God. We cannot make this same mistake. We have a miraculous Book at our disposal, one that contains the history of God’s workings in the world, that contains that marvelous promise of Romans 10:13 that **Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved**, and that perfectly conveys the commands of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ to His followers. We are to read His Word, study it, memorize it, and obey it completely. To “pick and choose” is to invite error, as the Pharisees did. Therefore, we must make sure to search out the “whole counsel of God” as revealed in Scripture on any given subject, “interpreting Scripture with Scripture” so that we avoid the introduction of error through misinterpretation or erroneous personal opinions. Jesus is Lord, and we are therefore called to obedience. His instructions—His Will—is found in the pages of His Word, so if we truly wish to obey Him as Lord we will consult the Word continually, seeking His guidance in increasing our understanding of it, and act accordingly, in obedience and reverence.

Section 4

1Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, 2saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; 3therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them. 4"They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. 5"But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. 6"They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, 7and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men. 8"But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. 9"Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. 10"Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. 11"But the greatest among you shall be your servant. 12"Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. 13"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. 14["Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.] 15"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. 16"Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.' 17"You fools and blind men! Which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold? 18"And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, that is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering on it, he is obligated.' 19"You blind men, which is more important, the offering, or the altar that sanctifies the offering? 20"Therefore, whoever swears by the altar, swears both by the altar and by everything on it. 21"And whoever swears by the temple, swears both by the temple and by Him who dwells within it. 22"And whoever swears by heaven, swears both by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it. 23"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. 24"You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! 25"Woe to you,

scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. 26"You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. 27"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. 28"So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. 29"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, 30and say, 'If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' 31"So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32"Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers. 33"You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell? 34"Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and 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, 35so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36"Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. (Matthew 23:1-36)

Jesus' reference to *the chair of Moses* is a possible reference, either literally or figuratively, to the platform from which Ezra read the Book of the Law (which was given by Moses) to the exiles who had returned from captivity in Babylon, or at least so says Matthew Henry!

1And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel. **2**Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and all who could listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. **3**He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law. **4**Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam on his left hand. **5**Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. **6**Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. **7**Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, explained the law to the people while the people remained in their place. **8**They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading. (Nehemiah 8:1-8)

Notice the reverence with which the people greeted the reading of the Word of God! Even if Jesus didn't intend a reference to this specific event, He still indicated that the Mosaic Law was to be regarded with reverence and, insofar as its precepts were not modified by the New Covenant, obeyed. The Law, and the whole of Scripture, is God's Word. Even woefully imperfect messengers like the scribes and Pharisees are to be obeyed as long as their instruction remains within the bounds of God's perfect and unchanging Word.

7The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul;

The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

8The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;

The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

9The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;

The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.

10They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;

Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.

11Moreover, by them Your servant is warned;

In keeping them there is great reward. (Psalm 19:7-11)

24For,

"ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS,

AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS.

THE GRASS WITHERS,

AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF,

25BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER "

And this is the word which was preached to you. (1 Peter 1:24-25)

The scribes and Pharisees, while they knew the Word very well in a pseudo-intellectual, legalistic sense, did not take its precepts to heart. As such, they refused to recognize Jesus the Christ, the Fulfillment of the Law, for who He was, and wound up condemned.

21Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. **22**But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. **23**For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; **24**for once he has

looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. **25**But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. **26**If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. **27**Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. (James 2:21-27)

1Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. (James 3:1)

39And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind." **40**Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?" **41**Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains. (John 9:39-41)

Instead of coming through faith to salvation in Jesus Christ, or even simply living in a Godly manner as prescribed in the Law, these men, these TEACHERS of the Law, were instead content to maintain an outward show of obedience, in spite of having no inward desire to truly submit to and serve God. King Saul also tried to serve God in his own way, and received a stern rebuke.

22Samuel said,

**"Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices
As in obeying the voice of the LORD?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
And to heed than the fat of rams.**

23"For rebellion is as the sin of divination,
And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry
Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,
He has also rejected you from being king." (1 Samuel 15:22-23)

God is our Creator, Lord, Master, and King. Our first priority must be to love and obey Him completely. Anything short of this is insubordinate, and therefore sinful.

Section 5

37"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. *38*"Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! *39*"For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'" (Matthew 23:37-39)

Anyone that thinks God takes pleasure in the damnation of unrepentant sinners has never read verse 37. They've also never read Ezekiel 33:11.

11"Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?' (Ezekiel 33:11)

However, the Lord is as just as He is merciful, and will not allow sin to go unpunished.

6Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; **7**who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations." **8**Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship. (Exodus 34:6-8)

Jerusalem's corporate defiance was requited to them when the city was leveled by the Romans in A.D. 70, and as Jesus Himself predicted.

1Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. **2**And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down." (Matthew 24:1-2)

But, God provided a Way for men to be saved from their just punishment. Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, was **"lifted up"** on a Roman cross, dying a cruel death and bearing the punishment for sin for all that will repent and believe.

14"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; 15so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. 16"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:14-16)

Jesus WILL return one day, and every knee WILL bow to Him. No one gets to choose whether or not he will bow the knee to the risen Christ. The question is, will you bow now and receive the everlasting life promised in John 3:16, or will you defy the Lord of all Creation in this life, and bow only at the Last Judgment, after which you will be thrown into the Lake of Fire?

11And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. 13He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. 15From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." (Revelation 19:11-16)

22"Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth;

For I am God, and there is no other.

23"I have sworn by Myself,

The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness

And will not turn back,

That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.

24"They will say of Me, 'Only in the LORD are righteousness and strength '

Men will come to Him,

And all who were angry at Him will be put to shame.

25"In the LORD all the offspring of Israel

Will be justified and will glory." (Isaiah 45:22-25)

11Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15)

God is just. He does not delight in the destruction of sinners, but He will not leave sin unpunished. Yet, He promised in Romans 10...

9that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. 11For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." 12For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; 13for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." (Romans 10:9-13)

Repent of sin and confess Jesus as Lord and Master. Believe that God raised Him from the dead and that He now lives and reigns forever. You only have eternal life to gain by doing so...and eternal punishment awaits if you refuse Him.