
Week 6

Day One

Prelude: Matthew 21:18-22

18 In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry. 19 And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once.

20 When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither at once?" 21 And Jesus answered them, "Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen. 22 And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."

1. Consider the setting. Where has Jesus been? Where is he headed? (vs. 23)
2. From a physical, things-of-earth perspective, what did Jesus want? What did he find? How did he respond? Why is Jesus' reaction justified?
3. The disciples responded to Jesus' actions with a things-of-earth question: "How did you do that?" Jesus responded with a things-of-God answer and turned their attention to faith exercised in prayer. But faith or belief (depending on your translation) always has an object. Who are the disciples to put their faith in?
4. How might the Jesus' prerequisite of faith assure that our request are aligned with the purposes of God?

Day Two

Parable One: Matthew 21:23-32

23 And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" 24 Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. 25 The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?" And they discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?'" 26 But if we say, 'From man,' we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet." 27 So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

28 "What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' 29 And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went. 30 And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. 31 Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. 32 For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

1. Here we are with the elders' confusion about Jesus' authority again. We have already established that Jesus has claimed the title "Son of Man." According to Daniel 7:13-14, by what authority has Jesus already declared that he speaks?
2. Jesus gives us an incredible example to imitate as he deals with scoffers. The elders' response points to the root of what they fear. How does what we fear demonstrate to whom or to what we regard as having authority?
3. Jesus tells a story -- a things-of-earth story to reveal a things-of-God reality. How does Jesus use that story to have the elders pronounce their own condemnation? (He will do this again in 21:41, and God tells us that they got the message in 21:45)
4. Jesus elevates John the Baptist's message far above the teaching of the Pharisees. Review John's message in Matthew 3:1-3 and note the continuity with Jesus' own message. What were they both pointing to?

5. The elder's response points to the root of what they fear. How does what we fear demonstrate to whom or to what we regard as having authority?

Day Three

Parable Two: Matthew 21:33-45

33 *"Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. 34 When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. 35 And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. 37 Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 38 But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.' 39 And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. 40 When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" 41 They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons."*

42 Jesus said to them, *"Have you never read in the Scriptures:*

*"The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord's doing,
and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"*

43 *Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. 44 And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."*

45 *When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. 46 And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.*

1. This parable is a parallel to one in Isaiah 5:1-7. The Matthew passage differs in that the vineyard has been let out to a husbandman, or a tenant farmer. Who is the tenant farmer? According to the passage in Isaiah, what is the vineyard fruit from which the master expects to have his share?
2. The parable of the tenants begins as a story and ends as prophecy through a second parable. The second parable references Psalm 118:22 where the builders have rejected a stone considered for the cornerstone of their building project. The evaluation of a cornerstone was given much care as its quality would impact the stability of the whole building, whether the walls would lean in or out or be straight and sturdy enough to support the roof of the building. This parable is parallel to the one of the tenant farmers. Who were the builders? Who have they rejected?
3. The corner stone also becomes a stumbling block. Read Daniel 2:34-45. What will be the consequences of the builders 'choice to reject the cornerstone?
4. Jesus spoke in not one but two parables to convey his truth to the Pharisees. Often the disciples had to ask for interpretation of the parables to fully understand their meaning. But the Pharisees seem to clearly understand Jesus' meaning. What do the Pharisees learn from this teaching? How do they respond? Why? (vs.45-46)

Day Four

Parable Three: Matthew 22:1-14

22 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."

1. In the parable of the wedding feast, who do the servants who invite the people represent?
2. What were the ways different groups responded to the invitation?
3. When the original guests failed to come the servants invited "as many as could be found, both good and bad". But when the king came to the dinner he singled out one guest. What does this guest represent? Is his punishment just?
4. This is the third in a series of parables Jesus has spoken to the Pharisees. What is the theme that runs through each of the three parables? What points is he emphasizing? **How ought we to respond to the King and his invitation?**

Day Five

Silencing the Scoffers: Matthew 22:15-45

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.

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.

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."

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.

1. The Herodians were a political group who supported submitting to Herod for peace and political favor. Their question to Jesus, "is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar?" begs him to challenge the authority of the government. Jesus tells the Herodians "give unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, give unto God that which is God's". What are the things we should give unto God?
2. The Sadducees did not believe in resurrection. They use Scripture in attempt to test Jesus (Deuteronomy 25:5-6). What was God's purpose for the Levirate marriage? Jesus responds with a quote from Exodus 3:6 where God introduces Himself to Moses via the burning bush. How does being God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob make Him the God of the living and not the dead?

3. Finally, the Pharisees were known for their expertise in interpretation of the law. Through this intricate interpretation they developed the elaborate system of legal traditions, or legalism they enforced on the Jewish people. They attempt to challenge Jesus to define the greatest commandment. How does the second most important commandment relate to the first? Jesus says that the law and the prophets depend on these first two commandments. How should this direct the Pharisees in their interpretation of the law?

4. Jesus then challenges the Pharisees in their interpretation of the scripture. Read Psalm 110. In verse 4 read "Yahweh said to my Adonai (son). Who is speaking, and who are they speaking to?"

5. Throughout all of our text this week Jesus reorders the people's thinking by crushing their previous paradigms. He changes the guest list for the wedding; redefines the place of taxes; speaks of a God who is resurrects; repositions marriage as an earthly institution; replaces a long list of laws with two supreme commands; and crushes his enemies under the feet of the one whom David called Lord. How has the Cornerstone shattered your earthly perspective and lifted your eyes to behold your King?