

February 28, 2010

**DEATH AND TAXES
MATTHEW 22.15-33**

Through loaded questions that seek to set Jesus at odds with present power/authority structures, the leadership in Israel seeks to discount and destroy Jesus.

1. WHOSE IMAGE? (15-22)

Pharisees, disciples, and Herodians (15-16): Pharisees - arose during the intertestamental period. Conservatives of their time; so conservative they didn't want to change with God's new revelation in Jesus. Theirs becomes a false righteousness (cf. 5.20)

Rivalry with Jesus may be expressed in the fact that they have *disciples* whom they send on a mission (cp. ch 10). Their mission is to bring about death, not life.

Herodians - supporters of the Herodian dynasty. Line of Herods = "half-breeds;" Idumeans, of the line of Esau.

Met Herod the Great (ch. 2, killer of babies), Herod Antipas, and Herodias (ch. 14, killers of John the Baptist). "Herodians," in the image of Herod, are seeking death.

Should we pay taxes to Caesar? (15-17): "took counsel together" - we hear the resonance of Ps 2. Tells us who the Pharisees are (i.e. enemies of YHWH and his Christ) and who Jesus is (i.e. the Christ/the Anointed).

Trying to entrap him in his words, they begin flattery that seeks to spread a net for his feet (Prv 29.5). But again, the net that they spread will be the means of their own capture.

"Truth" - not just "in line with facts" but also more general idea of faithfulness, esp revealed in God fulfilling his promises.

E.g. Jn 1.17 - Law & Moses contrasted with Jesus & truth. Moses & Law were not lies/liar. God's faithfulness to his promises revealed in Jesus.

Jesus is *of the truth* and *teaches the way of God in truth* - Jesus is the revelation of God's faithfulness to his promises (something Jesus proclaimed they knew in the previous parables).

He "cares for no man and does not see the faces of men" - Jesus teaches without fear or favor of man.

"Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" Israel is under Roman domination (has been since 63 BC). Taxes were a reflection of that domination.

God promised them a land that would be their own. But who really owns this land? Don't pay the taxes and find out!

Answer "Yes, pay your taxes," he looks like a Roman sympathizer and this would put him at odds with the nationalists and the zealots. Answer "No, don't pay taxes," then he will be accused of sedition against Rome, trying to set up a rival kingdom, and will be handled by the Roman authorities.

Giving back to Caesar and to God (18-22): "Test" - cf. 4.1-11. It is the vocation of the devil taken up by the Pharisees (cf. 16.1; 19.3; 22.35). They are the seed of the serpent.

"Hypocrites" - they are incriminated by their own words. If Jesus is "of the truth" and "teaches the way of God in truth," why aren't they following him? They are confessing one thing and living opposite of the confession.

"Bring me a coin" - Jesus doesn't have one on him. They do. They are the ones doing commerce with Caesar. Cf. Jn 19.15

Jesus' answer of "render to Caesar..." - ambiguous; could be "pay your taxes" or "give Caesar what he deserves." Does seem at least to imply that taxes should be paid (cp. Rom 13.1-7).

"Whose image and inscription is this?" That which bears the image of its creator belongs to the creator.

That which bears Caesar's image should be given back to him. That is part of his kingdom.

“and give to God what belongs to God” - “Whose image and inscription is upon you?” Cf. Gen 1.26. You are in the image of God and belong to him. Absolute loyalty belongs only to God.

They must stop being hypocrites and follow the truth of God revealed in Jesus.

They leave like the devil in 4.11. But unlike there, the testing continues.

2. WHAT ABOUT THE RESURRECTION?

A woman with seven husbands? (23-28): Sadducees - aristocracy in Israel; controlled the high priesthood (cf. e.g. Ac 5.17); loved and sought to maintain the status quo under Rome.

Don't believe in resurrection (cf. also Ac 23.6, or angels or spirits). Death = passing out of existence. Held only to the five books of Moses and believed the resurrection wasn't taught there.

Why be concerned about the teaching of the resurrection? This teaching has potential for upsetting political power structures. The resurrection motivates people to do things they would not otherwise do. Not concerned about maintaining status quo.

Try to show that teaching of resurrection would be contradictory to the Law of Moses. Use the law of the levirate (a brother marrying his dead brother's wife) from Dt 25.5-10. Cf. also Gen 38; Ruth.

Purpose of levirate marriage: to raise up seed/child for your brother so that his name will not die in Israel; so that he will maintain his inheritance in the land.

The Sadducees contention: if there is a resurrection, and this woman has all of these husbands, then the laws of God concerning polyandry (“multiple husbands”) will be violated. God would not contradict his own law setting up this situation.

God is the God of the living (29-33): Sadducees have wrong premises that lead to wrong conclusions. Don't know the Scriptures are the power of God (wrong premises).

Sadducees assume family will be eternal. Assumes that there will always be a need for being fruitful and multiplying, one of the original purposes of marriage (and the concern of the levirate marriage law).

Resurrection brings the man and the world to maturity like heaven was originally created (Gen 1.1) and the shape into which we are being molded (i.e. man & world are to be patterned after heaven and mature into conformity with heaven). Man will one day complete his work and enter into Sabbath as God did.

Marriage and fruitfulness are part of that mission. But once the mission is complete and we are a mature host (like the angels who cannot increase or diminish in number), then the purpose of marriage as it is will be ended.

They don't know the Scriptures. Missed the point of the passage they quoted. 22.24 “... *raise up/resurrect* seed...” God is concerned about resurrection of the man

Jesus' quote: Ex 3, burning bush. He says statement concerns the resurrection of the dead. Patriarchs are dead at the time this is said. Jesus says that they continue to live in the presence of God (not resurrection, but does away with passing out of existence).

Consider Abraham. God raised up/resurrected his and Sarah's body to raise up seed, Isaac (cf. Rom 4). Isaac is also “raised up” from death on the altar in a parable (cf. Heb 11.19). The seed/children of Abraham are children of the resurrection.

“I am” - worship of the living God means that you are being conformed to his image. Those who worship the living God must live.

“Power of God” - can the bond that God promises between himself and his people be overcome by death? Is God powerless?

1. Because you have been created and re-created in the image of God, you owe your total allegiance to him. 2. Your blood family is not ultimate but is to be understood within the context of kingdom building. 3. Our God will not be defeated by sin and the death that it brings. 4. The hope of the resurrection motivates us to give our all for the sake of Christ and his kingdom.