



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



# The Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew

## Chapter 22

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# Introduction

## Chapter Main Points:

- Many are called, but few are chosen
- Paying taxes, the resurrection, and the greatest commandment
- Christ as David's son and David's Lord



# An Overview

- Jesus told a third parable directed toward the religious leaders: the parable of the wedding feast (1-14)
- Pharisees and Herodians asked Jesus about paying taxes to Caesar (15-22)
- Sadducees and an argument against the resurrection of the dead (23-33)
- A lawyer asked about the greatest commandment of the Law (34-40)
- Jesus silenced them with a question of His own regarding the Christ as David's son (41-46)

# The Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-14)



- Jesus concludes His discourse with again describing,
  1. The rejection of the Jews
  2. The calling of the Gentiles to the true faith
  3. The final judgment of both
- The main design in this parable, is to show the Jews that they were all invited to believe in Christ; though so few of them believed
- The subject of the parable is the Kingdom of Heaven and the parable ends in a teaching on divine judgment

# The Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-14)



- It is the eighth time He has begun a parable with the words "the Kingdom of Heaven is like ," (Mt 13:24,31,33,44,45,47 and 52)
- Marriage is here mentioned, says St. Chrysostom to show there is nothing sorrowful in the Kingdom of God, but all full of the greatest spiritual joy
- It was the custom among the ancients for the guests to be invited twice
- First invitation was that they might prepare themselves
- The second invitation was then sent a short time before the banquet, that they might be there at the proper time

# The Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-14)



- The *king* is God
- *his son* is Jesus Christ
- The bride is His church
- *His servants* were the prophets
- *His servants were* also John the Baptist and Christ Himself, who took the form of a servant, to call such as had been formerly invited
- The servants of the second invitation were the apostles and other disciples in succession
- The *marriage* is Christ's incarnation

# The Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-14)



- The Jews were invited by Moses and the prophets, and were instructed to believe that the Messiah would celebrate this happy feast
- They were invited by the Son in person, crying aloud to them: *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest* (Matthew 11:28) And again: *If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink*, (John 7:37)
- Not by His words only, but by His actions also He called them
- He informed the invited Jews that the banquet was ready; because the Christian religion being now established, the way to eternal happiness was laid open to mankind

# The Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-14)



- He did not only send them a single invitation
- He repeatedly invited them
- The Jews were invited first of all, by the Savior and his apostles under the first commission before all things were ready, but they refused the invitation and rejected Christ
- Then, after all was made ready by the death and resurrection of Christ and the establishment of the kingdom, they were again invited before the apostles turned to the Gentiles
- For seven years from Pentecost, the gospel was preached to Jews alone



# The Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-14)



- The marriage feast is the doctrines, the sacraments and graces, with which God feeds and nourishes our souls, united to him by faith in this life, and by eternal joy and glory in the next
- By the Servants, we are to understand the first preachers of the Gospel, proclaiming salvation to the Jews
- John the Baptist and the seventy disciples (Luke 10:1), may be here particularly intended
- By the Other Servants, in verse 4, the apostles seem to be meant, who, though they were to preach the Gospel to the whole world, yet were to begin at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47) with the first offers of mercy

# The Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-14)



- They with useless excuses, temporal concerns and sensual enjoyments, their oxen, lands and wives, declined and disrespected the offer
- They neglected this salvation, and they preferred secular enjoyments to the kingdom of Christ
- The parable at this stage, verse 6, looks forward as well as backward, and seems to include the sufferings of Christian preachers and martyrs as well as those of the prophets who were sent to Israel

# The Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-14)



- This was fulfilled in the persecutions of the apostles and early church stirred by the Jews, Acts 4:3; 5:18,40; 7:58; 8:3; 12:3; 14:5,19; 16:23; 17:5; 21:30; 23:2; also the Epistles here and there
- These were by far the most wicked and the most ungrateful
- From the punishment inflicted on these, we learn, that no consideration, how specious in any way or to any degree possible it may appear, can prove a legitimate excuse for neglecting our spiritual duties. (St. John Chrysostom)
- If this marriage does not take place here, an eternal separation from God, and from the glory of His power, shall be the fearful consequence

# The Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-14)



- There are three states in which men run the risk of living without God and losing their souls
- First, *They made light of it*, That of a soft, idle, pleasurable life, wherein a man thinks of nothing but quietly to enjoy life, conveniences, riches, private pleasures, and public diversions
- Second, *One went to his own farm, and another to his business*, That of a man wholly taken up with agricultural or commercial employments, in which the love of riches, and application to the means of acquiring them, generally suppress all thoughts of salvation

# The Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-14)



- Third, *Seizing his servants, treated them spitefully*, That of a man who is openly unjust, violent, and outrageously wicked, who is a sinner by profession, and not only neglects his salvation, but injuriously treats all those who bring him the Gospel of reconciliation

# The Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-14)



- The king destroyed those murderers, and burnt their city; for sooner or later God is observed to exert His punishment on all such as despise His word, or persecute His ministers
- Here our Redeemer predicts the destruction of Jerusalem
- The Roman armies were chosen to inflict the retribution upon the Jewish nation
- The Almighty knew full well that they were not worthy; He still sent them these frequently repeated invitations, that they might be left without any excuse, (St. Chrysostom, hom. lxx.)

# The Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-14)



- They were not only less worthy of the marriage, but by their very great persistence, ungratefulness and wickedness, they were quite unworthy
- Those who reject the gospel invitation show that they are not worthy
- The apostles first kept themselves within the area of Judea, but the Jews continually sought their destruction
- Therefore St. Paul said to them, *It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles Acts 13:46*

# The Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-14)



- *The highways* - Literally, the "exit" or "going out" of the "paths or roads."
- It means the square or main street, into which a number of smaller streets enter; a place, therefore, of meeting, where many persons would be seen, and persons of all descriptions
- St. Luke says, *streets and lanes*, to point out the people to whom the apostles were sent, as either miserable beggars, or the most indigent poor, who were wandering about the country, or sitting by the sides of the ways and hedges, begging
- God sends His salvation to every soul, that all may believe and be saved



# The Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-14)



- The bad are invited, not to remain bad, but in order that they might become good
- The garment of life is our works; and this is here mentioned, that none might presume that faith alone was sufficient for salvation
- When, therefore we are called by the grace of God, we are clothed with a white garment, to preserve which from every stain, from every grievous sin, depends upon the diligence (the watching and praying) of every individual. (St. John Chrysostom)
- Those who think they can come to the feast on their own terms without a life of faith and works will be cast out

# The Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-14)



- The wedding guest without the wedding garment is he who came but did not care about the Bridegroom enough to take the time to present a soul purified through repentance and works of faith
- The king/God called upon him to confess, but he failed to ask for forgiveness
- At the hour of judgment it will be too late for those who failed to cleanse their souls in the Sacrament of Reconciliation

# The Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-14)



- *not having on a wedding-garment?*, Not having put off the old man and put on the new, not being made a new creature, not having put on the Lord Jesus Christ
- It refers also to baptism
- The place of "wailing and grinding of teeth" in verse 13 is the same place of eternal judgment as in the other parables, Matthew 13:49
- He has sent His Son as our Bridegroom, and He has given us all we need through the Sacraments to be dressed in the wedding garment of divine grace to enter into an intimate relationship with Christ the Bridegroom

# The Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-14)



- It is not God's desire that any should perish; He has made the invitation for us to come to salvation
- The “chosen” are those who both accept the invitation and comply with its condition; those who, in the one parable, work in the vineyard, and in the other, array themselves with the wedding garment of holiness
- The “choice,” as far as the parable is concerned, appears as dependent upon the answer given to the calling

# The Pharisees: Is It Lawful to Pay Taxes to Caesar? (22:15-22)



- During the first days of Jesus' teaching ministry in Jerusalem, He had two confrontations with the chief priests, the scribes/elders, and the Pharisees
- He answered their challenges to His authority in three parables (Mt 21:28; 22:1-14)
- Unable to refute Jesus' teaching, the Pharisees withdrew to regroup
- The Pharisees challenged Jesus again, but this time they joined forces with the Herodians, the supporters of Rome's vassal rulers, the descendants of Herod the Great

# The Pharisees: Is It Lawful to Pay Taxes to Caesar? (22:15-22)



- The Pharisees were not enthusiastic with Roman rule and as a group had refused to take the oaths of allegiance to Rome and to King Herod (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 17.2.4)
- The Herodians were Greek culture Jews who cooperated with and even admired the Romans
- They were not known as faithful observers of the Law
- Notice the same Pharisees that had challenged Jesus earlier didn't return with this challenge; they sent their disciples who one assumes had not been present earlier, perhaps the strategy was that their disciples would not be recognized by Jesus

# The Pharisees: Is It Lawful to Pay Taxes to Caesar? (22:15-22)



- It is worthy of remark, that they sought to trap Him in His words, and never were able to discover a fault in any action of His whole life
- The Pharisees had instructed their disciples and the Herodians to speak in this seemingly friendly manner to our Savior, that they might put Him off His guard, and thereby trap Him; thinking that Jesus, like other men, could be led away by flattery
- Thus do all hypocrites act

# The Pharisees: Is It Lawful to Pay Taxes to Caesar? (22:15-22)



- The difficulty of the question:
  1. It was asked in the presence of the people, who professed to have no other king but God, and looked on their independence as an essential point of their religion
  2. In the presence of the Pharisees; some of which were of opinion, that it was unlawful for the people of God to serve strangers and idolaters
  3. In the presence of the Herodians; if He denied the legality of this hated capitation-tax, He would earn their displeasure and be denounced to Cæsar



# The Pharisees: Is It Lawful to Pay Taxes to Caesar? (22:15-22)



- He would be encouraging the people to reject Rome's authority over Judea and the Jews and could be arrested by the Romans for encouraging revolution
- However, if he had said yes, they expected that it would destroy His influence, as the people hated the Romans
- He will be taking a position contrary to the feelings of the majority of the common people who followed Him because they are looking to Him as the liberator-Messiah who will free them from the Romans

# The Pharisees: Is It Lawful to Pay Taxes to Caesar? (22:15-22)



- *You hypocrites?* Our Divine Savior knowing their malice, and that it was their wish in proposing this question, to render Him horrible to the people, or a suspicious character to the governor, answers them in these severe words
- Another motive was, to let them see that the secrets of their deepest heart were open to Him, and thus encourage them to be converted from their wickedness
- Certainly, if they perceived that He could read their hearts, they must concluded that He was something more than human
- It was probably part of the fiscal regulation of the Roman government that the poll-tax should be paid in that coin only

# The Pharisees: Is It Lawful to Pay Taxes to Caesar? (22:15-22)



- He knew well enough *whose image and inscription* they were; but He showed the superiority of His wisdom in making them answer to their own confusion
- They came to trap our Lord in His discourse, and now they are trapped in their own
- The conclusion is drawn from their own premises
- You acknowledge this to be Caesar's coin; this coin is current, in your land; the currency of this coin shows the country to be under the Roman government; and your acknowledgment that it is Caesar's proves you have submitted

# The Pharisees: Is It Lawful to Pay Taxes to Caesar? (22:15-22)



- Don't therefore be unjust; but render to Caesar the things which you acknowledge to be his; at the same time, be not wicked, but render unto God the thing's which belong to God
- What our Savior here commands us to give to God, is nothing else but our heart and affections
- The civil government under which a man lives, and by which he is protected, demands his honor and reverence
- The laws should be obeyed

# The Pharisees: Is It Lawful to Pay Taxes to Caesar? (22:15-22)



- By this decision, Caesar is satisfied
- God is glorified - His honor is in every respect secured
- And the People are edified - one of the most difficult questions that could possibly come before them is answered in such a way as to relieve their consciences, and direct their conduct

# The Sadducees: What About the Resurrection? (22:23-33)



- Jesus has stunned the Pharisees and the Herodians, and now the Sadducees try to test Him
- The Sadducees were the religious/political party that was for the most part composed of the chief priests
- The Sadducees did not believe in a physical resurrection of the dead like the Pharisees (Lk 20:27; Acts 23:8)
- The Sadducees counted among their supporters the wealthy and the aristocracy

# The Sadducees: What About the Resurrection? (22:23-33)



- The Sadducees only observed the precepts of the written Law in the Torah/Pentateuch (five books of Moses), unlike the Pharisees who accepted other books as Sacred Scripture and also followed the oral Law
- To present their argument against the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, the Sadducees bring up the statute concerning marriage in Deuteronomy 25:5-10
- The Sadducees proposed an extreme hypothetical case of a woman who married in turn seven times to brothers
- At the conclusion of their story, they ask whose wife she will be in the resurrection

# The Sadducees: What About the Resurrection? (22:23-33)



- Jesus gives them a shockingly strong rebuke; these are chief priests
- Jesus then instructs them in reverse order, telling them they do not understand the resurrection (22:30) nor do they understand the Pentateuch "the Torah of Moses (22:31-32)
- Had they known the Scriptures, they would not have fallen into this error; since therein are found abundant testimonies of a resurrection
- It cannot be difficult for the power of God, which created and formed all things from nothing, to raise the body again after it has been reduced to ashes



# The Sadducees: What About the Resurrection? (22:23-33)



- *As the angels*, Not in every respect, for the body shall be likewise raised with the soul, while the angels are pure spirits: but in this we shall be like unto angels, we shall be gifted with immortality, and impassibility; and our joys, like those of the angels, shall be completely spiritual
- Whenever Jesus challenged His opponents' misguided understanding of the Scriptures He says "*have you not read*"
- Knowing that the Sadducees did not consider anything but the Torah of Moses to be Spirit inspired Scripture, Jesus uses the Torah to prove their improper understanding of the resurrection of the dead

# The Sadducees: What About the Resurrection? (22:23-33)



- The Sadducees, who considered themselves to be the authoritative interpreters of the Torah of Moses and the "shepherds of Israel," must have been highly insulted
- God does not say, I was, but I 'am' the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob
- The present tense shows that He is still the God of the departed patriarchs, and that they are still in existence
- These patriarchs, dead as they are in our eyes as to their bodies, are still alive in the eyes of God as to their souls, which He has created immortal

# The Sadducees: What About the Resurrection? (22:23-33)



- The multitudes were amazed, not only at an interpretation which was entirely new to them, and which opened to them some of the depths of that Scripture of which they had been taught and knew only the letter; but because Christ showed that He looked into men's hearts, saw what was the motive and cause of their opinions, and, in explaining difficulties, unfolded eternal truths
- The other Gospels (Mk 12:28; Lk 20:39) record the admiration of agreement “*Teacher, You have spoken well.*” as well as astonishment

# The Scribes: Which Is the First Commandment of All? (22:34-40)



- The Pharisees come as a group to test Jesus again
- They select a scribe who was an expert in the Law, to ask Jesus another question
- Perhaps they thought that if one be reduced to silence, he alone may appear to be refuted; and, if he is victorious, they may all appear conquerors
- However, St. Mark tells us this scholar was impressed by Jesus' answer to the Sadducees in defense of the resurrection (Mk 12:28)

# The Scribes: Which Is the First Commandment of All? (22:34-40)



- The Jews divided their commandments into greater and lesser, but were not agreed in particulars
- The Talmud counted the positive laws of Moses at 248, the negative at 365, in all 613
- To keep so many laws, said the Jews, is an angel's work
- So they had much question which was the great commandment, so that they might keep it in lieu of keeping the whole

# The Scribes: Which Is the First Commandment of All? (22:34-40)



- Jesus' answer is from two passages from the Torah
- The first and greatest commandment is from Deuteronomy 6:5, summing up one's relationship with God
- He who loves God supremely cannot live in disobedience to Him
- The second is from Leviticus 19:18 and is the summary of the commandments concerning one's relationship with one's fellow man/woman
- One who loves his neighbor as himself, will seek the welfare of those around him

# The Scribes: Which Is the First Commandment of All? (22:34-40)



- In quoting these passages, Jesus is summing up the entire law upon which, He says, the Torah and the books of the Prophets are based (Mt 22:40)
- Whereby it is evident that all depends not upon *faith* only, though faith be the first, but much more upon *charity*, which is the love of God and of our neighbor
- St. Mark tells us that the scribe praised Jesus' answer and the scribe's response, which showed his correct understanding of Scripture, prompted Jesus to commend him saying *You are not far from the kingdom of God* (Mk 12:28-34)

# Jesus: How Can David Call His Descendant Lord? (22:41-46)



- Jesus turns the tables on the group of Pharisees and asks them a question, quoting from Psalm 110:1
- He wanted to show the people that the source of all the misleading questions of His opponents was their ignorance of the prophecies relative to the Messiah
- The promised Messiah was identified in the Scriptures as the son of David (see Isa 11:1, 10; Jer 23:5; Ezek 34:23-24)
- It was allowed of as a certain truth, that the Messiah was to be the son of David



# Jesus: How Can David Call His Descendant Lord? (22:42-46)



- Christ shows them by David's own words, that He was *the Lord* as well as the *son of David*; and this is what they could not answer to
- Jesus Christ here teaches the Pharisees, that two natures must be admitted in the Messiah; in one of which, in His human nature, He is the son of David, and as such inferior to him; and in the other, in His divine nature, He is the son of God, and consequently superior to David; whence this latter, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, justly calls him Lord

# Jesus: How Can David Call His Descendant Lord? (22:42-46)



- Jesus Christ does not wish them to think that the Messiah is not the son of David, but only wished to correct their opinion concerning him
- When therefore He asks how He is the son, He teaches them that He is not after the manner they understand it, the mere *Son*, but what is much more, the *Lord* also, of David. (St. John Chrysostom)
- As the Jews did not attempt to deny the conclusion of our Lord's question, which was, the Messiah is not only the son of David according to the flesh, but He is the Lord of David according to His Divine nature, then it is evident they could not

# Jesus: How Can David Call His Descendant Lord? (22:42-46)



- Indeed, there was no other way of invalidating the argument, but by denying that the prophecy in question related to Christ: but it seems the prophecy was so fully and so generally understood to belong to the Messiah that they did not attempt to do this; for it is immediately added, *And no one was able to answer Him a word*, they were completely confused and burning
- Our Lord put the four great sects of the Jews to silence, in one day, successively
- The Herodians and Pharisees wanted to know whether they might lawfully pay tribute to Caesar or not

# Jesus: How Can David Call His Descendant Lord? (22:42-46)



- The Sadducees were inquisitive to know whose wife the woman should be of the seven brethren, in the resurrection, who had her to wife
- Then comes the scribe, who owned no authority beyond or besides the written law, and asked which was the great commandment in the law
- From this time, we do not find that our Lord was any more troubled with their malicious questions: their whole stock, it appears, was exhausted, and now they calmly deliberate on the most effectual way to get him murdered



# Conclusion

- Who is the king, who is the king's son, and what is the "wedding feast"?
- What is the "wedding garment" that the guest has failed to wear?
- Why are there three sets of invitations and why do some of those invited guests reject the invitation?
- How did Pharisees and Herodians try to entangle Jesus in His talk?
- What is the malice in the collaboration between them in asking Jesus the question about paying taxes?



# Conclusion

- How does Jesus reverse the trap?
- How does Jesus tailor his answer to the Sadducees and their acceptance of only the first five books of the Hebrew Bible?
- What two-fold answer did Jesus give the Sadducees?
- How can Christ be both David's son and David's Lord?
- How honest are you in paying taxes to the local, state, and federal governments? What excuses do you make to yourself to avoid paying taxes? How generous are you in contributing to the financial support of the Church?