

CHAPTER 22

This chapter is a continuation of Christ's discourses in the temple, two or three days before he died. His discourses then are largely recorded, as being of special weight and consequence. In this chapter, we have,

I. Instruction given, by the parable of the marriage-supper, concerning the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles (v. 1-10), and, by the doom of the guest that had not the wedding-garment, the danger of hypocrisy in the profession of Christianity (v. 11-14).

II. Disputes with the Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes, who opposed Christ,

1. Concerning paying tribute to Caesar (v. 15-22).
2. Concerning the resurrection of the dead, and the future state (v. 23-33).
3. Concerning the great commandment of the law (v. 34-40).
4. Concerning the relation of the Messiah to David (v. 41-46).

~~421~~ MATTHEW 22:1-14

THE PARABLE OF THE MARRIAGE FEAST

We have here the parable of the guests invited to *the wedding-feast*. In this it is said (v. 1), *Jesus answered*, not to what his opposers *said* (for they were put to silence), but to what they *thought*, when they were wishing for an opportunity to *lay hands on him*, ~~424b~~ Matthew 21:46. Note, Christ knows how to answer men's thoughts, for he is a Discerner of them. Or, He *answered*, that is, he continued his discourse to the same purport; for this parable represents the gospel offer, and the entertainment it meets with, as the former, but under another similitude. The parable of the vineyard represents the sin of the rulers that persecuted the prophets; it shows also the sin of the people, who generally neglected the message, while their great ones were persecuting the messengers.

I. Gospel preparations are here represented by a feast which a king made *at the marriage of his son*; such is *the kingdom of heaven*, such the

provision made for precious souls, in and by the new covenant. The King is God, *a great King, King of kings*. Now,

1. Here is *a marriage made for his son*, Christ is the Bridegroom, the church is the bride; the gospel-day is *the day of his espousals*, ^{<281>}Song of Solomon 3:11. Behold by faith *the church of the first-born, that are written in heaven*, and were given to Christ by him whose they were; and in them you see *the bride, the Lamb's wife*, ^{<629>}Revelation 21:9. The gospel covenant is a marriage covenant betwixt Christ and believers, and it is a marriage of God's making. This branch of the similitude is only mentioned, and not prosecuted here.

2. Here is *a dinner prepared for this marriage*, v. 4. All the privileges of church-membership, and all the blessings of the new covenant, pardon of sin, the favour of God, peace of conscience, the promises of the gospel, and all the riches contained in them, access to the throne of grace, the comforts of the Spirit, and a well-grounded hope of eternal life. These are the preparations for this feast, a heaven upon earth now, and a heaven in heaven shortly. God has prepared it in his counsel, in his covenant. It is a dinner, denoting present privileges in the midst of our day, beside the supper at night in glory.

(1.) It is *a feast*. Gospel preparations were prophesied of as *a feast* (^{<286>}Isaiah 25:6), *a feast of fat things*, and were typified by the many festivals of the ceremonial law (^{<488>}1 Corinthians 5:8); *Let us keep the feast*. *A feast is a good day* (^{<100>}Esther 7:17); so is the gospel; it is a continual feast. *Oxen and fatlings are killed* for this feast; no niceties, but substantial food; enough, and enough of the best. The day of a feast is *a day of slaughter*, or sacrifice, ^{<585>}James 5:5. Gospel preparations are all founded in the death of Christ, his sacrifice of himself. A feast was made for love, it is a reconciliation feast, a token of God's goodwill toward men. It was made *for laughter* (^{<109>}Ecclesiastes 10:19), it is a rejoicing feast. It was made for fulness; the design of the gospel was to fill every *hungry soul with good things*. It was made for fellowship, to maintain an intercourse between heaven and earth. We are sent for *to the banquet of wine, that we may tell what is our petition, and what is our request*.

(2.) It is *a wedding feast*. Wedding feasts are usually rich, free, and joyful. The first miracle Christ wrought, was, to make plentiful provision for a wedding feast (^{<87>}John 2:7); and surely then he will not be wanting in provision for his own wedding feast, when *the marriage of the Lamb is*

come, and the bride hath made herself ready, a victorious triumphant feast, ^{<69>}Revelation 19:7, 17, 18.

(3.) It is a *royal wedding feast*; it is *the feast of a king* (^{<0256>}1 Samuel 25:36), at the marriage, not of a servant, but of a son; and then, if ever, he will, like Ahasuerus, show *the riches of his glorious kingdom*, ^{<1006>}Esther 1:4. The provision made for believers in the covenant of grace, is not such as worthless worms, like us, had any reason to expect, but such as it becomes *the King of glory* to give. He gives like himself; for he gives himself to be to them *El shaddai* — *a God that is enough*, a feast indeed for a soul.

II. Gospel calls and offers are represented by an invitation to this feast. Those that make a feast will have guests to grace the feast with. God's guests are the children of men. *Lord, what is man*, that he should be thus dignified! *The guests* that were first invited were the Jews; wherever the gospel is preached, this invitation is given; ministers are the *servants* that are sent to invite, (^{<3006>}Proverbs 9:4, 5)

Now,

1. The guests *are called, bidden* to the wedding. All that are within hearing of the joyful sound of the gospel, to them is the word of this invitation sent. The servants that bring the invitation do not set down their names in a paper; there is no occasion for that, since none are excluded but those that exclude themselves. *Those that are bidden to the dinner are bidden to the wedding*; for all that partake of gospel privileges are to give a due and respectful attendance on the Lord Jesus, as the faithful friends and humble servants of the Bridegroom. They are *bidden to the wedding*, that they may *go forth to meet the bridegroom*; for it is the Father's will that *all men should honour the Son*.

2. The guests are called upon; for in the gospel there are not only gracious proposals made, but gracious persuasives. *We persuade men, we beseech them in Christ's stead*, ^{<491>}2 Corinthians 5:11, 20. See how much Christ's heart is set upon the happiness of poor souls! He not only provides for them, in consideration of their want, but sends to them, in consideration of their weakness and forgetfulness. When the invited guests were slack in coming, the king *sent forth other servants*, v. 4. When the prophets of the Old Testament prevailed not, nor John the Baptist, nor Christ himself, who told them the entertainment was almost ready (*the kingdom of God was at*

hand), the apostles and ministers of the gospel were sent after Christ's resurrection, to tell them it was come, it was quite ready; and to persuade them to accept the offer. One would think it had been enough to give men an intimation that they had leave to come, and should be welcome; that, during the solemnity of the wedding, the king kept open house; but, because *the natural man discerns not*, and therefore desires not, *the things of the Spirit of God*, we are pressed to accept the call by the most powerful inducements, *drawn with the cords of a man, and all the bonds of love*. If the repetition of the call will move us, *Behold, the Spirit saith, Come; and the bride saith, Come; let him that heareth say, Come; let him that is athirst come,* ⁽⁶²⁷⁾ Revelation 22:17. If the reason of the call will work upon us, *Behold, the dinner is prepared, the oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready*; the Father is ready to accept of us, the Son to intercede for us, the Spirit to sanctify us; pardon is ready; peace is ready, comfort is ready; the promises are ready, as *wells of living water* for supply; ordinances are ready, as golden pipes for conveyance; angels are ready to attend us, creatures are ready to be in league with us, providences are ready to work for our good, and heaven, at last, is ready to receive us; it is *a kingdom prepared, ready to be revealed in the last time*. Is all this ready; and shall we be unready? Is all this preparation made for us; and is there any room to doubt of our welcome, if we come in a right manner? Come, therefore, *O come to the marriage; we beseech you, receive not all this grace of God in vain,* ⁽⁶¹¹⁾ 2 Corinthians 6:1.

III. The cold treatment which the gospel of Christ often meets with among the children of men, represented by the cold treatment that this message met with and the hot treatment that the messengers met with, in both which the king himself and the royal bridegroom are affronted. This reflects primarily upon the Jews, who rejected the counsel of God against themselves; but it looks further, to the contempt that would, by many in all ages, be put upon, and the opposition that would be given to, the gospel of Christ.

1. The message was basely slighted (v. 3); *They would not come*. Note, The reason why sinners come not to Christ and salvation by him is, not because they *cannot*, but because *they will not* (⁽⁴⁵⁰⁾ John 5:40); *Ye will not come to me*. This will aggravate the misery of sinners, that they might have had happiness for the coming for, but it was their own act and deed to refuse it. *I would, and ye would not*. But this was not all (v. 5); *they made light of it*; they thought it not worth coming for; thought the

messengers made more ado than needs; let them magnify the preparations ever so much, they could feast as well at home. Note, Making light of Christ, and of the great salvation wrought out by him, is the damning sin of the world. *Amelesantes* — *They were careless*. Note, Multitudes perish eternally through mere carelessness, who have not any direct aversion, but a prevailing indifference, to the matters of their souls, and an unconcernedness about them.

And the reason why *they made light of the marriage feast* was, because they had other things that they minded more, and had more mind to; *they went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise*. Note, The business and profit of worldly employments prove to many a great hindrance in closing with Christ: none turn their back on the feast, but with some plausible excuse or other, ^{<CH>}Luke 14:18. The country people have their farms to look after, about which there is always something or other to do; the town's people must tend their shops, and be constant upon the exchange; they must *buy, and sell, and get gain*. It is true, that both farmers and merchants must be diligent in their business but not so as to keep them from making religion their main business. *Licitis perimus omnes* — *These lawful things undo us*, when they are unlawfully managed, when we are so *careful and troubled about many things* as to neglect the *one thing needful*. Observe, Both the city and the country have their temptations, the merchandise in the one, and the farms in the other; so that, whatever we have of the world in our hands, our care must be to keep it out of our hearts, lest it come between us and Christ.

2. The messengers were basely abused; *The remnant*, or the rest of them, that is, those who did not go the *farms*, or *merchandise*, were neither husbandmen nor tradesmen, but ecclesiastics, *the scribes, and Pharisees, and chief priests*; these were the persecutors, these *took the servants, and treated them spitefully, and slew them*. This, in the parable, is unaccountable, never any could be so rude and barbarous as this, to servants that came to invite them to a feast; but, in the application of the parable, it was matter of fact; they whose *feet* should have been *beautiful*, because they brought *the glad tidings of the solemn feasts* (^{<CH>}Nahum 1:15), were *treated as the offscouring of all things*, ^{<CH>}1 Corinthians 4:13. The prophets and John the Baptist had been thus abused already, and the apostles and ministers of Christ must count upon the same. The Jews were, either directly or indirectly, agents in most of the persecutions of the

first preachers of the gospel; witness the history of *the Acts*, that is, the sufferings of *the apostles*.

IV. The utter ruin that was coming upon the Jewish church and nation is here represented by the revenge which the king, in wrath, took on these insolent recusants (v. 7); *He was wroth*. The Jews, who had been the people of God's love and blessing, by rejecting the gospel became the generation of his wrath and curse. *Wrath came upon them to the uttermost*, ^{<3106>}1 Thessalonians 2:16. Now observe here,

1. What was the crying sin that brought the ruin; it was their being *murderers*. He does not say, he destroyed those *despisers of his call*, but *those murderers of his servants*; as if God were more jealous for the lives of his ministers than for the honour of his gospel; he that *toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye*. Note, Persecution of Christ's faithful ministers fills the measure of guilt more than any thing. *Filling Jerusalem with innocent blood* was that sin of Manasseh which *the Lord would not pardon*, ^{<1244>}2 Kings 24:4.

2. What was the ruin itself, that was coming; *He sent forth his armies*. The Roman armies were his armies, of his raising, of his sending against the people of his wrath; and he *gave them a charge to tread them down*, ^{<3106>}Isaiah 10:6. God is the Lord of men's host, and makes what use he pleases of them, to serve his own purposes, though they *mean not so, neither doth their heart think so*, ^{<3107>}Isaiah 10:7. See ^{<3111>}Micah 4:11, 12. *His armies destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city*. This points out very plainly the destruction of the Jews, and the burning of Jerusalem, by the Romans, forty years after this. No age ever saw a greater desolation than that, nor more of the direful effects of fire and sword. Though Jerusalem had been a *holy city, the city that God had chosen, to put his name there, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth*; yet that city being now *become a harlot, righteousness being no longer lodged in it, but murderers, the worst of murderers* (as the prophet speaks, ^{<3112>}Isaiah 1:21), judgment came upon it, and ruin without remedy; and it is set forth for an example to all that should oppose Christ and his gospel. It was the Lord's doing, to avenge the quarrel of his covenant.

V. The replenishing of the church again, by the bringing in of the Gentiles, is here represented by the furnishing of the feast with guests *out of the high-ways*, v. 8-10.

Here is,

1. The complaint of the master of the feast concerning those that were first bidden (v. 8), *The wedding is ready*, the covenant of grace ready to be sealed, a church ready to be founded; *but they which were bidden*, that is, the Jews, *to whom pertained the covenant and the promises*, by which they were of old invited to the *feast of fat things*, they were not worthy, they were utterly unworthy, and, by their contempt of Christ, had forfeited all the privileges they were invited to. Note, It is not owing to God, that sinners perish, but to themselves. Thus, when Israel of old was within sight of Canaan, the land of promise was ready, the milk and honey ready, but their unbelief and murmuring, and contempt of that pleasant land, shut them out, and their carcasses were left to perish in the wilderness; and *these things happened to them for ensamples*. See ^{<401>}1 Corinthians 10:11; ^{<386>}Hebrews 3:16-4:1.

2. The commission he gave to the servants, to invite other guests. The inhabitants of the *city* (v. 7) had refused; *Go into the high-ways* then; into *the way of the Gentiles*, which at first they were to decline, ^{<405>}Matthew 10:5. Thus by the fall of the Jews salvation is come to the Gentiles, ^{<311>}Romans 11:11, 12; ^{<408>}Ephesians 3:8. Note, Christ will have a *kingdom in the world*, though many reject the grace, and resist the power, of that kingdom. *Though Israel be not gathered, he will be glorious*. The offer of Christ and salvation to the Gentiles was,

(1.) Unlooked for and unexpected; such a surprise as it would be to wayfaring men upon the road to be met with an invitation to a wedding feast. The Jews had notice of the gospel, long before, and expected the Messiah and his kingdom; but to the Gentiles it was all new, what they had never heard of before (^{<407>}Acts 17:19, 20), and, consequently, what they could not conceive of as belonging to them. See ^{<281>}Isaiah 65:1, 2.

(2.) It was universal and undistinguishing; *Go, and bid as many as you find*. The highways are public places, and there *Wisdom cries*, ^{<300>}Proverbs 1:20. “Ask them that go by the way, ask any body (^{<303>}Job 21:29), high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, young and old, Jew and Gentile; tell them all, that they shall be welcome to gospel-privileges upon gospel-terms; whoever will, let him come, without exception.”

3. The success of this second invitation; if some will not come, others will (v. 10); *They gathered together all, as many as they found*. The servants

obeyed their orders. Jonah was sent *into the high-ways*, but was so tender of the honour of his country, that he avoided the errand; but Christ's apostles, though Jews, preferred the service of Christ before their respect to their nation; and St. Paul, though sorrowing for the Jews, yet magnifies his office as the apostle of Gentiles. *They gathered together all*. The design of the gospel is,

(1.) To gather souls together; not the nation of the Jews only, but *all the children of God* who were *scattered abroad* (~~415~~John 11:52), *the other sheep that were not of that fold*, ~~416~~John 10:16. They were gathered into one body, one family, one corporation.

(2.) To gather them together to the wedding-feast, to pay their respect to Christ, and to partake of the privileges of the new covenant. Where the dole is, there will the poor be gathered together.

Now the guests that were gathered were,

[1.] A multitude, *all, as many as they found*; so many, that the guest-chamber was filled. The sealed ones of the Jews were numbered, but those of other nations *were without number, a very great multitude*, ~~417~~Revelation 7:9. See ~~2104~~Isaiah 60:4, 8.

[2.] A mixed multitude, *both bad and good*; some that before their conversion were sober and well-inclined, as the devout Greeks (~~418~~Acts 17:4) and Cornelius; others that had run to an excess of riot, as the Corinthians (~~419~~1 Corinthians 6:11); *Such were some of you*; or, some that after their conversion proved bad, that *turned not to the Lord with all their heart*, but feignedly; others that were upright and sincere, and proved of the right class. Ministers, in casting the net of the gospel, enclose *both good fish and bad; but the Lord knows them that are his*.

VI. The case of hypocrites, who are *in* the church, but not *of* it, who have a name to live, but are not alive indeed, is represented by *the guest that had not on a wedding garment*; one of the bad that were gathered in. Those come short of salvation by Christ, not only who refuse to take upon them the profession of religion, but who are not sound at heart in that profession. Concerning this hypocrite observe,

1. His discovery, how he was found out, v. 11.

(1.) *The king came in to see the guests*, to bid those welcome who came prepared, and to turn those out who came otherwise. Note, The God of heaven takes particular notice of those who profess religion, and have a place and name in the visible church. Our Lord Jesus *walks among the golden candlesticks* and therefore *knows their works*. See ^{<681>}Revelation 2:1, 2; ^{<207>}Song of Solomon 7:12. Let this be a warning to us against hypocrisy, that disguises will shortly be stripped off, and every man will appear in his own colours; and an encouragement to us in our sincerity, that God is a witness to it.

Observe, This hypocrite was never discovered to be without *a wedding garment*, till *the king himself came in to see the guests*. Note, It is God's prerogative to know who are sound at heart in their profession, and who are not. We may be deceived in men, either one way or other; but He cannot. The day of judgment will be the great discovering day, when all the guests will be presented to the King: then *he will separate between the precious and the vile* (^{<253>}Matthew 25:32), *the secrets of all hearts will then be made manifest*, and we shall infallibly discern *between the righteous and the wicked*, which now it is not easy to do. It concerns all the guests, to prepare for the scrutiny, and to consider how they will pass the piercing eye of the heart-searching God.

(2.) As soon as he came in, he presently espied the hypocrite; *He saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment*; though but one, he soon had his eye upon him; there is no hope of being hid in a crowd from the arrests of divine justice; he had not on a wedding garment; he was not dressed as became a nuptial solemnity; he had not his best clothes on. Note, Many come to the wedding feast without a wedding garment. If the gospel be the wedding feast, then the wedding garment is a frame of heart, and a course of life agreeable to the gospel and our profession of it, *worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called* (^{<401>}Ephesians 4:1), *as becomes the gospel of Christ*, ^{<302>}Philippians 1:27. *The righteousness of saints*, their real holiness and sanctification, and Christ, *made Righteousness to them*, *is the clean linen*, ^{<688>}Revelation 19:8. This man was not naked, or in rags; some raiment he had, but not a wedding garment. Those, and those only, who *put on the Lord Jesus*, that have a Christian temper of mind, and are adorned with Christian graces, who live by faith in Christ, and to whom he is all in all, have the wedding garment.

2. His trial (v. 12); and here we may observe,

(1.) How he was arraigned (v. 12); *Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?* A startling question to one that was priding himself in the place he securely possessed at the feast. *Friend!* That was a cutting word; a seeming friend, a pretended friend, a friend in profession, under manifold ties and obligations to be a friend. Note, There are many in the church who are false friends to Jesus Christ, who say that they love him while their hearts are not with him. *How camest thou in hither?* He does not chide the servants for letting him in (the wedding garment is an inward thing, ministers must go according to that which falls within their cognizance); but he checks his presumption in crowding in, when he knew that his heart was not upright; “How durst thou claim a share in gospel benefits, when thou hadst no regard to gospel rules? *What has thou to do to declare my statutes?*” ^{<3816>}Psalm 50:16, 17 Such are spots in the feast, dishonour the bridegroom, affront the company, and disgrace themselves; and therefore, *How camest thou in hither?* Note, The day is coming, when hypocrites will be called to an account for all their presumptuous intrusion into gospel ordinances, and usurpation of gospel privileges. *Who hath required this at your hand?* ^{<3812>}Isaiah 1:12. Despised sabbaths and abused sacraments must be reckoned for, and judgment taken out upon an action of waste against all those who *received the grace of God in vain*. “How camest thou to the Lord's table, at such a time, unhumbled and unsanctified? What brought thee to sit before God's prophets, as his people do, when thy heart went after thy covetousness? *How comes thou in?* Not by the door, but *some other way, as a thief and a robber*. It was a tortuous entry, a possession without colour of a title.” Note, It is good for those that have a place in the church, often to put it to themselves, “How came I in hither? Have I a wedding-garment?” If we would thus *judge ourselves, we should not be judged*.

(2.) How he was convicted; *he was speechless: ephimothē* — *he was muzzled* (so the word is used, ^{<4092>}1 Corinthians 9:9); the man stood mute, upon his arraignment, being convicted and condemned by his own conscience. They who live within the church, and die without Christ, will not have one word to say for themselves in the judgment of the great day, they will be without excuse; should they plead, *We have eaten and drunk in thy presence*, as they do, ^{<4136>}Luke 13:26, that is to plead guilty; for the crime they are charged with, is thrusting themselves into the presence of Christ, and to his table, before they were called. They who never heard a word of this wedding feast will have more to say for themselves; their sin

will be more excusable, and their condemnation more tolerable, than theirs who came to the feast without the wedding garment, and so sin against the clearest light and dearest love.

3. His sentence (v. 13); *Bind him hand and foot*, etc.

(1.) He is ordered to be pinioned, as condemned malefactors are, to be manacled and shackled. Those that will not work and walk as they should, may expect to be bound hand and foot. There is a binding in this world by the servants, the ministers, whose suspending of persons that walk disorderly, to the scandal of religion, is called binding of them, ^{<183>}Matthew 18:18. “Bind them up from partaking of special ordinances, and the peculiar privileges of their church-membership; bind them over to the righteous judgment of god.” *In the day of judgment*, hypocrites will be bound; *the angels shall bind up these tares in bundles for the fire*, ^{<131>}Matthew 13:41. Damned sinners are bound hand and foot by an irreversible sentence; this signifies the same with the fixing of the great gulf; they can neither resist nor outrun their punishment.

(2.) He is ordered to be carried off from the wedding feast; *Take him away*. When the wickedness of hypocrites appears, they are to be taken away from the communion of the faithful, to be cut of as withered branches. This bespeaks the punishment of loss in the other world; they shall be taken away from the king, from the kingdom, from the wedding feast, *Depart from me, ye cursed*. It will aggravate their misery, that (like the unbelieving lord, ^{<102>}2 Kings 7:2), *they shall see all this plenty with their eyes, but shall not taste of it*. Note, Those that walk unworthy of their Christianity, forfeit all the happiness they presumptuously laid claim to, and complimented themselves with a groundless expectation of.

(3.) He is ordered into a doleful dungeon; *Cast him into utter darkness*. Our Saviour here insensibly slides out of this parable into that which it intimates — the damnation of hypocrites in the other world. Hell is utter darkness, it is darkness out of heaven, the land of light; or it is extreme darkness, darkness to the last degree, without the least ray or spark of light, or hope of it, like that of Egypt; *darkness which might be felt; the blackness of darkness, as darkness itself*, ^{<812>}Job 10:22. Note, Hypocrites go by the light of the gospel itself down to utter darkness; and hell will be hell indeed to such, a condemnation more intolerable; *there shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth*. This our Saviour often uses as part of the description of hell-torments, which are hereby represented, not so much by

the misery itself, as by the resentment sinners will have of it; there shall be *weeping*, an expression of great sorrow and anguish; not a gush of tears, which gives present ease, but constant weeping, which is constant torment; and the *gnashing of teeth* is an expression of the greatest rage and indignation; they will be *like a wild bull in a net, full of the fury of the Lord*, ^{<2510>}Isaiah 51:20; 8:21, 22. Let us therefore hear and fear.

Lastly, The parable is concluded with that remarkable saying which we had before (^{<4116>}Matthew 20:16), *Many are called, but few are chosen*, v. 14. Of the many that are called to the wedding feast, if you set aside all those as unchosen that make light of it, and avowedly prefer other things before it; if then you set aside all that make a profession of religion, but the temper of whose spirits and the tenour of whose conversation are a constant contradiction to it; if you set aside all the profane, and all the hypocritical, you will find that they are few, very few, that are chosen; many called to the wedding feast, but few chosen to the wedding garment, that is, to *salvation, by sanctification of the Spirit*. This is the *strait gate, and narrow way, which few find*.

^{<4215>}MATTHEW 22:15-22

THE QUESTION RESPECTING TRIBUTE

It was not the least grievous of the sufferings of Christ, that *he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself*, and had snares laid for him by those that sought how to take him off with some pretence. In these verses, we have him attacked by the Pharisees and Herodians with a question about paying tribute to Caesar. Observe,

I. What the design was, which they proposed to themselves; *They took counsel to entangle him in his talk*. Hitherto, his encounters had been mostly with the chief priests and the elders, men in authority, who trusted more to their power than to their policy, and examined him concerning his commission (^{<4213>}Matthew 21:23); but now he is set upon from another quarter; the Pharisees will try whether they can deal with him by their learning in the law, and in casuistical divinity, and they have a *tentamen novum* — *a new trial* for him. Note, It is in vain for the best and wisest of men to think that, by their ingenuity, or interest, or industry, or even by their innocence and integrity, they can escape the hatred and ill will of bad

men, or screen themselves from *the strife of tongues*. See how unwearied the enemies of Christ and his kingdom are in their opposition!

1. *They took counsel.* It was foretold concerning him, that *the rulers would take counsel against him* (^{<BRP>}Psalm 2:2); and *so persecuted they the prophets. Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah.* See ^{<JRS>}Jeremiah 18:18; 20:10. Note, The more there is of contrivance and consultation about sin, the worse it is. There is a particular *woe to them that devise iniquity*, ^{<3RE>}Micah 2:1. The more there is of the wicked wit in the contrivance of a sin, the more there is of the wicked will in the commission of it.

2. That which they aimed at was *to entangle him in his talk*. They saw him free and bold in speaking his mind, and hoped by that, if they could bring him to some nice and tender point, to get an advantage against him. It has been the old practice of Satan's agents and emissaries, to make a man an offender for a word, a word misplaced, or mistaken, or misunderstood; a word, though innocently designed, yet perverted by strained inuendos: thus they lay a snare for him that *reproveth in the gate* (^{<33P>}Isaiah 29:21), and represent the greatest teachers as the greatest troublers of Israel: thus *the wicked plotteth against the just*, ^{<137D>}Psalm 37:12, 13.

There are two ways by which the enemies of Christ might be revenged on him, and be rid of him; either by law or by force. By law they could not do it, unless they could make him obnoxious to the civil government; for *it was not lawful for them to put any man to death* (^{<4RS>}John 18:31); and the Roman powers were not apt to concern themselves about *questions of words, and names, and their law*, ^{<4RS>}Acts 18:15. By force they could not do it, unless they could make him obnoxious to the people, who were always the hands, whoever were the heads, in such acts of violence, which they call the beating of the rebels; but the people took Christ for a Prophet, and therefore his enemies could not raise the mob against him. Now (as the old serpent was from the beginning *more subtle than any beast of the field*), the design was, to bring him into such a dilemma, that he must make himself liable to the displeasure either of the Jewish multitude, or of the Roman magistrates; let him take which side of the question he will, he shall run himself into a premunire; and so they will gain their point, and make his own tongue to fall upon him.

II. The question which they put to him pursuant to this design, v. 16, 17. Having devised this iniquity in secret, in a close cabal, behind the curtain, when they went abroad without loss of time they practised it. Observe,

1. The persons they employed; they did not go themselves, lest the design should be suspected and Christ should stand the more upon his guard; but they sent their disciples, who would look less like tempters, and more like learners. Note, Wicked men will never want wicked instruments to be employed in carrying on their wicked counsels. Pharisees have their disciples at their beck, who will go any errand for them, and say as they say; and they have this in their eyes, when they are so industrious to make proselytes.

With them they sent the Herodians, a party among the Jews, who were for a cheerful and entire subjection to the Roman emperor, and to Herod his deputy; and who made it their business to reconcile people to that government, and pressed all to pay their tribute. Some think that they were the collectors of the land tax, as the publicans were of the customs, and that they went with the Pharisees to Christ, with this blind upon their plot, that while the Herodians demanded the tax, and the Pharisees denied it, they were both willing to refer it to Christ, as a proper Judge to decide the quarrel. Herod being obliged, by the charter of the sovereignty, to take care of the tribute, these Herodians, by assisting him in that, helped to endear him to his great friends at Rome. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were zealous for the liberty of the Jews, and did what they could to make them impatient of the Roman yoke. Now, if he should countenance the paying of tribute, the Pharisees would incense the people against him; if he should discountenance or disallow it, the Herodians would incense the government against him. Note, It is common for those that oppose one another, to continue in an opposition to Christ and his kingdom. Samson's foxes looked several ways, but met in one firebrand. See ~~1888~~ Psalm 83:3, 5, 7, 8. If they are unanimous in opposing, should not we be so in maintaining, the interests of the gospel?

2. The preface, with which they were plausibly to introduce the question; it was highly complimentary to our Saviour (v. 16); *Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth.* Note, It is a common thing for the most spiteful projects to be covered with the most specious pretences. Had they come to Christ with the most serious enquiry, and the most sincere intention, they could not have expressed themselves better.

Here is *hatred covered with deceit*, and a *wicked heart with burning lips* (²¹⁶³Proverbs 26:23); as Judas, who kissed, and betrayed, as Joab, who kissed, and killed.

Now,

(1.) What they said of Christ was right, and whether they knew it or no, blessed be God, we know it.

[1.] That Jesus Christ was a faithful Teacher; *Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth*. For himself, *he is true, the Amen, the faithful Witness*; he is the Truth itself. As for his doctrine, the matter of his teaching was the way of God, the way that God requires us to walk in, the way of duty, that leads to happiness; that is the way of God. The manner of it was in truth; he showed people *the right way, the way in which they should go*. He was a skilful Teacher, and knew the way of God; and a faithful Teacher, that would be sure to let us know it. See ²⁰⁸⁶Proverbs 8:6-9. This is the character of a good teacher, to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and not to suppress, pervert, or stretch, any truth, for favour or affection, hatred or good will, either out of a desire to please, or a fear to offend, any man.

[2.] That he was a bold Reprover. In preaching, he *cared not for any*; he valued no man's frowns or smiles, he did not court, he did not dread, either the great or the many, for he *regarded not the person of man*. In his evangelical judgment, he did not know faces; that *Lion of the tribe of Judah, turned not away for any* (²¹⁰⁰Proverbs 30:30), turned not a step from the truth, nor from his work, for fear of the most formidable. He *reproved with equity* (²¹⁰⁴Isaiah 11:4), and never with partiality.

(2.) Though what they said was true for the matter of it, yet there was nothing but flattery and treachery in the intention of it. They called him *Master*, when they were contriving to treat him as the worst of malefactors; they pretended respect for him, when they intended mischief against him; and they affronted his wisdom as Man, much more his omniscience as God, of which he had so often given undeniable proofs, when they imagined that they could impose upon him with these pretences, and that he could not see through them. It is the grossest atheism, that is the greatest folly in the world, to think to put a cheat upon Christ, who searches the heart, (⁶¹²³Revelation 2:23. Those that mock God do but deceive themselves. ⁴¹⁶⁷Galatians 6:7.

3. The proposal of the case; *What thinkest thou?* As if they had said, “Many men are of many minds in this matter; it is a case which relates to practice, and occurs daily; let us have thy thought freely in the matter, *Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?*” This implies a further question; Has Caesar a right to demand it? The nation of the Jews was lately, about a hundred years before this, conquered by the Roman sword, and so, as other nations, made subject to the Roman yoke, and became a province of the empire; accordingly, toll, tribute, and custom, were demanded from them, and sometimes poll-money. By this it appeared that *the sceptre was departed from Judah* (^{<440>}Genesis 49:10); and therefore, if they had understood the signs of the times, they must have concluded that *Shiloh* *was come*, and either that this was he, or they must find out another more likely to be so.

Now the question was, Whether it was lawful to pay these taxes voluntarily, or, Whether they should not insist upon the ancient liberty of their nation, and rather suffer themselves to be distrained upon? The ground of the doubt was, that they *were Abraham's seed*, and should not by consent be *in bondage to any man*, ^{<488>}John 8:33. God had given them a law, that they should not *set a stranger over them*. Did not that imply, that they were not to yield any willing subjection to any prince, state, or potentate, that was not of their own nation and religion? This was an old mistake, arising from that *pride and thathaughty spirit* which bring *destruction and a fall*. Jeremiah, in his time, though he spoke in God's name, could not possibly beat them off it, nor persuade them to submit to the king of Babylon; and their obstinacy in that matter was then their ruin (^{<272>}Jeremiah 27:12, 13): and now again they stumbled at the same stone; and it was the very thing which, in a few years after, brought final destruction upon them by the Romans. They quite mistook the sense both of the precept and of the privilege, and, under colour of God's word, contended with his providence, when they should have kissed the rod, and accepted the punishment of their iniquity.

However, by this question they hoped to entangle Christ, and, which way soever he resolved it, to expose him to the fury either of the jealous Jews, or of the jealous Romans; they were ready to triumph, as Pharaoh did over Israel, that *the wilderness had shut him in*, and his doctrine would be concluded either injurious to the rights of the church, or hurtful to kings and provinces.

III. The breaking of this snare by the wisdom of the Lord Jesus.

1. He discovered it (v. 18); *He perceived their wickedness; for, surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird,* ^{^{am17}Proverbs 1:17. A temptation perceived is half conquered, for our greatest danger lies from snakes under the green grass; *and he said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?* Note, Whatever vizard the hypocrite puts on, our Lord Jesus sees through it; he perceives all the wickedness that is in the hearts of pretenders, and can easily convict them of it, and set it in order before them. He cannot be imposed upon, as we often are, by flatteries and fair pretences. He that searches the heart can call hypocrites by their own name, as Ahijah did the wife of Jeroboam (^{^{am16}1 Kings 14:6), *Why feignest thou thyself to be another? Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?* Note, Hypocrites tempt Jesus Christ; they try his knowledge, whether he can discover them through their disguises; they try his holiness and truth, whether he will allow of them in this church; but if they that of old *tempted Christ*, when he was but darkly revealed, *were destroyed of serpents, of how much sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy* who tempt him now in the midst of gospel light and love! Those that presume to tempt Christ will certainly find him too hard for them, and that he is of more piercing eyes than not to see, and more pure eyes than not to hate, the disguised wickedness of hypocrites, that dig deep to hide their counsel from him.}}

2. He evaded it; his convicting them of hypocrisy might have served for an answer (such captious malicious questions deserve a reproof, not a reply): but our Lord Jesus gave a full answer to their question, and introduced it by an argument sufficient to support it, so as to lay down a rule for his church in this matter, and yet to avoid giving offence, and to break the snare.

(1.) He forced them, ere they were aware, to confess Caesar's authority over them, v. 19, 20. In dealing with those that are captious, it is good to give our reasons, and, if possible, reasons of confessed cogency, before we give our resolutions. Thus the evidence of truth may silence gainsayers by surprise, while they only stood upon their guard against the truth itself, not against the reason of it; *Show me the tribute-money.* He had none of his own to convince them by; it should seem, he had not so much as one piece of money about him, for for our sakes he emptied himself, and became poor; he despised the wealth of this world, and thereby taught us not to

over-value it; silver and gold he had none; why then should we covet to load ourselves with the thick clay? The Romans demanded their tribute in their own money, which was current among the Jews at that time: that therefore is called the *tribute-money*; he does not name what piece but the *tribute money*, to show that he did not mind things of that nature, nor concern himself about them; his heart was upon better things, the kingdom of God and the riches and righteousness thereof, and ours should be so too. They presently *brought him a penny*, a Roman penny in silver, in value about sevenpence half-penny of our money, the most common piece then in use: it was stamped with the emperor's image and superscription, which was the warrant of the public faith for the value of the pieces so stamped; a method agreed on by most nations, for the more easy circulation of money with satisfaction. The coining of money has always been looked upon as a branch of the prerogative, a flower of the crown, a royalty belonging to the sovereign powers; and the admitting of that as the good and lawful money of a country is an implicit submission to those powers, and an owning of them in money matters. How happy is our constitution, and how happy we, who live in a nation where, though the image and superscription be the sovereign's, the property is the subject's, under the protection of the laws, and what we have we can call our own!

Christ asked them, *Whose image is this?* They owned it to be Caesar's, and thereby convicted those of falsehood who said, *We were never in bondage to any*; and confirmed what afterward they said, *We have no king but Caesar*. It is a rule in the Jewish Talmud, that "he is the king of the country whose coin is current in the country." Some think that the superscription upon this coin was a memorandum of the conquest of Judea by the Romans, *anno post captam Judaeam* — *the year after that event*; and that they admitted that too.

(2.) From thence he inferred the lawfulness of paying tribute to Caesar (v. 21); *Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's*; not, "Give it him" (as they expressed it, v. 17), but, "*Render it; Return,*" or "*Restore it*; if Caesar fill the purses, let Caesar command them. It is too late now to dispute paying tribute to Caesar; for you are become a province of the empire, and, when once a relation is admitted, the duty of it must be performed. *Render to all their due*, and particularly *tribute to whom tribute is due*." Now by this answer,

[1.] No offence was given. It was much to the honour of Christ and his doctrine, that he did not interpose as a Judge or a Divider in matters of this nature, but left them as he found them, for *his kingdom is not of this world*; and in this he hath given an example to his ministers, who deal in sacred things, not to meddle with disputes about things secular, not to wade far into controversies relating to them, but to leave that to those whose proper business it is. Ministers that would mind their business, and please their master, must not *entangle themselves in the affairs of this life*: they forfeit the guidance of God's Spirit, and the convoy of his providence when they thus to out of their way. Christ discusses not the emperor's title, but enjoins a peaceable subjection to *the powers that be*. The government therefore had no reason to take offence at his determination, but to thank him, for it would strengthen Caesar's interest with the people, who held him for a Prophet; and yet such was the impudence of his prosecutors, that, though he had expressly charged them to *render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's*, they laid the direct contrary in his indictment, that he *forbade to give tribute to Caesar*, [☞]Luke 23:2. As to the people, the Pharisees could not accuse him to them, because they themselves had, before they were aware, yielded the premises, and then it was too late to evade the conclusion. Note, Though truth seeks not a fraudulent concealment, yet it sometimes needs a prudent management, to prevent the offence which may be taken at it.

[2.] His adversaries were reprov'd. *First*, Some of them would have had him make it unlawful to give tribute to Caesar, that they might have a pretence to save their money. Thus many excuse themselves from that which they must do, by arguing whether they may do it or no. *Secondly*, They all withheld from God his dues, and are reprov'd for that: while they were vainly contending about their civil liberties, they had lost the life and power of religion, and needed to be put in mind of their duty to God, with that to Caesar.

[3.] His disciples were instructed, and standing rules left to the church.

First, That the Christian religion is no enemy to civil government, but a friend to it. Christ's kingdom doth not clash or interfere with the kingdoms of the earth, in any thing that pertains to their jurisdiction. By Christ kings reign.

Secondly, It is the duty of subjects to render to magistrates that which, according to the laws of their country, is their due. The higher powers,

being entrusted with the public welfare, the protection of the subject, and the conservation of the peace, are entitled, in consideration thereof, to a just proportion of the public wealth, and the revenue of the nation. *For this cause pay we tribute*, because *they attend continually to this very thing* (~~4316~~Romans 13:6); and it is doubtless a greater sin to cheat the government than to cheat a private person. Though it is the constitution that determines what is Caesar's, yet, when that is determined, Christ bids us render it to him; my coat is my coat, by the law of man; but he is a thief, by the law of God, that takes it from me.

Thirdly, When we render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, we must remember withal to render to God the things that are God's. If our purses be Caesar's, our consciences are God's; he hath said, *My son, give me thy heart*: he must have the innermost and uppermost place there; we must render to God that which is his due, out of our time and out of our estates; from them he must have his share as well as Caesar his; and if Caesar's commands interfere with God's *we must obey God rather than men*.

Lastly, Observe how they were nonplussed by this answer; they *marvelled, and left him, and went their way*, v. 22. They admired his sagacity in discovering and evading a snare which they thought so craftily laid. Christ is, and will be, the Wonder, not only of his beloved friends, but of his baffled enemies. One would think they should have marvelled and followed him, marvelled and submitted to him; no, they marvelled and left him. Note, There are many in whose eyes Christ is marvellous, and yet not precious. They admire his wisdom, but will not be guided by it, his power, but will not submit to it. *They went their way*, as persons ashamed, and made an inglorious retreat. The stratagem being defeated, they quitted the field. Note, There is nothing got by contending with Christ.

~~4225~~ MATTHEW 22:23-33

THE QUESTION RESPECTING MARRIAGE

We have here Christ's dispute with the Sadducees concerning the resurrection; it was the same day on which he was attacked by the Pharisees about paying tribute. Satan was now more busy than ever to ruffle and disturb him; it was *an hour of temptation*, (~~4680~~Revelation 3:10).

The truth as it is in Jesus will still meet with contradiction, in some branch or other of it. Observe here,

I. The opposition which the Sadducees made to a very great truth of religion; they say, *There is no resurrection*, as there are some fools who say, *There is no God*. These heretics were called *Sadducees* from one Sadoc, a disciple of Antigonus Sochaeus, who flourished about two hundred and eighty-four years before our Saviour's birth. They lie under heavy censures among the writers of their own nation, as men of base and debauched conversations, which their principles led them to. They were the fewest in number of all the sects among the Jews, but generally persons of some rank. As the Pharisees and Essenes seemed to follow Plato and Pythagoras, so the Sadducees were much of the genius of the Epicureans; they denied the resurrection, they said, There is no future state, no life after this; that, when the body dies, the soul is annihilated, and dies with it; that there is no state of rewards or punishments in the other world; no judgment to come in heaven or hell. They maintained, that, except God, there is not spirit (~~4218~~ Acts 23:8), nothing but matter and motion. They would not own the divine inspiration of the prophets, nor any revelation from heaven, but what God himself spoke upon mount Sinai. Now the doctrine of Christ carried that great truth of the resurrection and a future state much further than it had yet been revealed, and therefore the Sadducees in a particular manner set themselves against it. The Pharisees and Sadducees were contrary to each other, and yet confederates against Christ. Christ's gospel hath always suffered between superstitious ceremonious hypocrites and bigots on the one hand, and profane deists and infidels on the other. The former abusing, the latter despising, the *form* of godliness, but both denying the *power* of it.

II. The objection they made against the truth, which was taken from a supposed case of a woman that had seven husbands successively; now they take it for granted, that, if there be a resurrection, it must be a return to such a state as this we are now in, and to the same circumstances, like the imaginary Platonic year; and if so, it is an invincible absurdity for this woman in the future state to have seven husbands, or else an insuperable difficulty which of them should have her, he whom she had first, or he whom she had last, or he whom she loved best, or he whom she lived longest with.

1. They suggest the law of Moses in this matter (v. 24), that the next of kin should marry the widow of him that died childless (^{<625>}Deuteronomy 25:5); we have it practised ^{<604>}Ruth 4:5. It was a political law, founded in the particular constitution of the Jewish commonwealth, to preserve the distinction of families and inheritances, of both which there was special care taken in that government.

2. They put a case upon this statute, which, whether it were a *case in fact* or only a *moot case*, is not at all material; if it had not really occurred, yet possibly it might. It was of seven brothers, who married the same woman, v. 25-27. Now this case supposes,

(1.) The desolations that death sometimes makes in families when it comes with commission; how it often sweeps away a whole fraternity in a little time; seldom (as the case is put) according to seniority (the land of darkness is without any order,) but *heaps upon heaps*; it diminishes families that had multiplied greatly, ^{<647>}Psalms 107:38, 39. When there were seven brothers grown up to man's estate, there was a family very likely to be built up; and yet this numerous family leaves *neither son nor nephew, nor any remaining in their dwellings*, ^{<689>}Job 18:19. Well may we say then, *Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it*. Let none be sure of the advancement and perpetuity of their names and families, unless they could *make a covenant of peace with death*, or be at an *agreement with the grave*.

(2.) The obedience of these seven brothers to the law, though they had a power of refusal under the penalty of a reproach, ^{<625>}Deuteronomy 25:7. Note, Discouraging providences should not keep us from doing our duty because we must be governed by the rule, not by the event. The seventh, who ventured last to marry the widow (many a one would say) was *abold* man. I would say, if he did it purely in obedience to God, he was a *good* man, and one that made conscience of his duty.

But, *last of all, the woman died also*. Note, Survivorship is but a reprieve; they that live long, and bury their relations and neighbours one after another, do not thereby acquire an immortality; no, their day will come to fall. Death's bitter cup goes round, and, sooner or later, we must all pledge in it, ^{<256>}Jeremiah 25:26.

3. They propose a doubt upon this case (v. 28); "*In the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven?*" You cannot tell whose; and therefore

we must conclude *there is no resurrection.*” The Pharisees, who professed to believe a resurrection, had very gross and carnal notions concerning it, and concerning the future state; expecting to find there, as the Turks in their paradise, the delights and pleasures of the animal life, which perhaps drove the Sadducees to deny the thing itself; for nothing gives greater advantage to atheism and infidelity than the carnality of those that make religion, either in its professions or in its prospects, a servant to their sensual appetites and secular interests; while those that are erroneous deny the truth, those that are superstitious betray it to them. Now they, in this objection, went upon the Pharisees' hypothesis. Note, It is not strange that carnal minds have very false notions of spiritual and eternal things. The natural man receiveth not these things, *for they are foolishness to him.* ~~4124~~ 1 Corinthians 2:14. Let truth be set in a clear light, and then it appears in its full strength.

III. Christ's answer to this objection; by reproving their ignorance, and rectifying their mistake, he shows the objection to be fallacious and unconcluding.

1. He reproves their ignorance (v. 29); *Ye do err.* Note, Those do greatly err, in the judgment of Christ, who deny the resurrection and a future state. Here Christ reproves with the meekness of wisdom, and is not so sharp upon them (whatever was the reason) as sometimes he was upon the chief priests and elders; *Ye do err, not knowing.* Note, Ignorance is the cause of error; those that are in the dark, miss their way. The patrons of error do *therefore* resist the light, and do what they can to take away the key of knowledge; *Ye do err* in this matter, *not knowing.* Note, Ignorance is the cause of error about the resurrection and the future state. *What* it is in its particular instances, the wisest and best know not; it doth not yet appear what we shall be, it is a glory that is to be revealed: when we speak of the state of separate souls, the resurrection of the body, and of eternal happiness and misery, we are soon at a loss; we cannot order our speech, by reason of darkness, but that it *is* a thing about which we are not left in the dark; blessed be God, we are not; and those who deny it are guilty of a willing and affected ignorance. It seems, there were some Sadducees, some such monsters, among professing Christians, *some among you, that say, There is no resurrection of the dead* (~~4152~~ 1 Corinthians 15:12) and some that did in effect deny it, by turning it into an allegory, saying, *The resurrection is past already.* Now observe,

(1.) *They know not the power of God;* which would lead men to infer that there *may be* a resurrection and a future state. Note, The ignorance, disbelief, or weak belief, of God's power, is at the bottom of many errors, particularly theirs who deny the resurrection. When we are told of the soul's existence and agency in a state of separation from the body, and especially that a dead body, which had lain many ages in the grave, and is turned into common and indistinguished dust, that this shall be raised the same body that it was, and live, move, and act, again; we are ready to say, *How can these things be?* Nature allows it for a maxim, *A privatione ad habitum non datur regressus* — *The habits attaching to a state of existence vanish irrecoverably with the state itself.* If a man die, shall he live again? And vain men, because they cannot comprehend the *way* of it, question the *truth* of it; whereas, if we firmly believe in God the Father Almighty, that nothing is impossible with God, all these difficulties vanish. This therefore we must fasten upon, in the first place, that God is omnipotent, and can do what he will; and then no room is left for doubting but that he will do what he has promised; and, if so, *why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?* ~~408~~ Acts 26:8. His power far exceeds the power of nature.

(2.) *They know not the scriptures,* which decidedly affirm that there shall be a resurrection and a future state. The power of God, determined and engaged by his promise, is the foundation for faith to build upon. Now the scriptures speak plainly, that the soul is immortal, and there is another life after this; it is the scope both of the law and of the prophets, *that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust,* ~~424~~ Acts 24:14, 15. Job knew it (~~386~~ Job 19:26), Ezekiel foresaw it (Ezekiel 37), and Daniel plainly foretold it, ~~711~~ Daniel 12:2. Christ rose again *according to the scriptures* (~~435~~ 1 Corinthians 15:3); and so shall we. Those therefore who deny it, either have not conversed with the Scriptures, or do not believe them, or do not take the true sense and meaning of them. Note, Ignorance of the scripture is the rise of abundance of mischief.

2. He rectifies their mistake, and (v. 30) corrects those gross ideas which they had of the resurrection and a future state, and fixes these doctrines upon a true and lasting basis. Concerning that state, observe,

(1.) It is not like the state we are now in upon earth; *They neither marry, nor are given in marriage.* In our present state marriage is necessary; it was instituted in innocency; whatever intermission or neglect there has

been of other institutions, this was never laid aside, nor will be till the end of time. In the old world, they were *marrying, and giving in marriage*; the Jews in Babylon, when cut off from other ordinances, yet were bid to *take them wives*, ^{<2916>}Jeremiah 29:6. All civilized nations have had a sense of the obligation of the marriage covenant; and it is requisite for the gratifying of the desires, and recruiting the deficiencies, of the human nature. But, in the resurrection, there is no occasion for marriage; whether in glorified bodies there will be any distinction of sexes some too curiously dispute (the ancients are divided in their opinions about it); but, whether there will be a distinction or not, it is certain that there will be no conjunction; where God will be *all in all*, there needs no other *meet-help*; the body will be *spiritual*, and there will be in it no carnal desires to be gratified: when the mystical body is completed, there will be no further occasion to *seek a godly seed*, which was one end of the institution of marriage, ^{<3015>}Malachi 2:15. In heaven there will be no decay of the individuals, and therefore no eating and drinking; no decay of the species, and therefore no marrying; *where there shall be no more deaths* (^{<6204>}Revelation 21:4), there need be no more births. The married state is a composition of joys and cares; those that enter upon it are taught to look upon it as subject to changes, *richer and poorer, sickness and health*; and therefore it is fit for this mixed, changing world; but as in hell, where there is no joy, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride shall be heard no more at all, so in heaven, where there is all joy, and no care or pain or trouble, there will be no marrying. The joys of that state are pure and spiritual, and arise from the marriage of all of them to the Lamb, not of any of them to one another.

(2.) It is like the state angels are now in in heaven; *They are as the angels of God in heaven*; they are so, that is, undoubtedly they shall be so. They are so already in Christ their Head, who has made them *sit with him in heavenly places*, ^{<4116>}Ephesians 2:6. The spirits of just men already made perfect are of the same corporation with the innumerable company of angels, ^{<5822>}Hebrews 12:22, 23. Man in his creation was *made a little lower than the angels* (^{<4185>}Psalms 8:5); but in his complete redemption and renovation will be as the angels; pure and spiritual as the angels, knowing and loving as those blessed seraphim, ever praising God like them and with them. The bodies of the saints shall be raised incorruptible and glorious, like the uncompounded vehicles of those pure and holy spirits (^{<4352>}1 Corinthians 15:42, etc.), swift and strong, like them. We should *therefore* desire and endeavour to do the will of God now as the angels do

it in heaven, because we hope shortly to be like the angels who always behold our Father's face. He saith nothing of the state of the wicked in the resurrection; but, by consequence, they shall be like the devils, whose lusts they have done.

IV. Christ's argument to confirm this great truth of the resurrection and a future state; the matters being of great concern, he did not think it enough (as in some other disputes) to discover the fallacy and sophistry of the objection, but backed the truth with a solid argument; for Christ *brings forth judgment to truth* as well as victory, and enables his followers to give a reason of the hope that is in them. Now observe,

1. Whence he fetched his argument — from the scripture; that is the great magazine or armoury whence we may be furnished with spiritual weapons, offensive and defensive. *It is written* is Goliath's sword. *Have ye not read that which was spoken to you by God?* Note,

(1.) What the scripture speaks God speaks.

(2.) What was spoken to Moses was spoken to us; it was spoken and *written for our learning*.

(3.) It concerns us to read and hear what God hath spoken, because it is spoken to us. It was spoken to you Jews in the first place, for to them were committed the oracles of God. The argument is fetched from the books of Moses, because the Sadducees received *them* only, as some think, or, at least, them chiefly, for canonical scriptures; Christ therefore fetched his proof from the most indisputable fountain. The latter prophets have more express proofs of a future state than the law of Moses has; for though the law of Moses supposes the immortality of the soul and a future state, as principles of what is called natural religion, yet no express revelation of it is made by the law of Moses; because so much of that law was peculiar to that people, and was therefore guarded as municipal laws used to be with temporal promises and threatenings, and the more express revelation of a future state was reserved for the latter days; but our Saviour finds a very solid argument for the resurrection even in the writings of Moses. Much scripture lies under ground, that must be digged for.

2. What his argument was (v. 32); *I am the God of Abraham*. This was not an express proof, *totidem verbis* — *in so many words*; and yet it was really a conclusive argument. Consequences from scripture, if rightly deduced,

must be received as scripture; for it was written for those that have the use of reason.

Now the drift of the argument is to prove,

(1.) That there is a future state, another life after this, in which the righteous shall be truly and constantly happy. This is proved from what God said; *I am the God of Abraham.*

[1.] For God to be any one's God supposes some very extraordinary privilege and happiness; unless we know fully what God is, we could not comprehend the riches of that word, *I will be to thee a God*, that is, a Benefactor like myself. The *God of Israel* is a *God to Israel* (~~1372~~1 Chronicles 17:24), a spiritual Benefactor; for he is the Father of spirits, and blesseth with spiritual blessings: it is to be an all-sufficient Benefactor, a God that is enough, a complete Good, and an eternal Benefactor; for he is himself an everlasting God, and will be to those that are in covenant with him an everlasting Good. This great word God had often said to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and it was intended as a recompence for their singular faith and obedience, in quitting the country at God's call. The Jews had a profound veneration for those three patriarchs, and would extend the promise God made them to the uttermost.

[2.] It is manifest that these good men had no such extraordinary happiness, in *this* life, as might look any thing like the accomplishment of so great a word as that. They were strangers in the land of promise, wandering, pinched with famine; they had not a foot of ground of their own but a burying-place, which directed them to look for something beyond this life. In present enjoyments they came far short of their neighbours that were strangers to this covenant. What was there in this world to distinguish them and the heirs of their faith from other people, any whit proportionable to the dignity and distinction of this covenant? If no happiness had been reserved for these great and good men on the other side of death, that melancholy word of poor Jacob's, when he was old (~~1409~~Genesis 47:9), *Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been*, would have been an eternal reproach to the wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness, of that God who had so often called himself *the God of Jacob*.

[3.] Therefore there must certainly be a future state, in which, as God will ever live to be eternally rewarding, so Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, will

ever live to be eternally rewarded. That of the apostle (³¹¹⁶Hebrews 11:16), is a key to this argument, where, when he had been speaking of the faith and obedience of the patriarchs in the land of their pilgrimage, he adds, *Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; because he has provided for them a city, a heavenly city; implying, that if he had not provided so well for them in the other world, considering how they sped in this, he would have been ashamed to have called himself their God; but now he is not, having done that for them which answers it in its true intent and full extent.*

(2.) That the soul is immortal, and the body shall rise again, to be united; if the former point be gained, these will follow; but they are likewise proved by considering the time when God spoke this; it was to Moses at the bush, long after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were dead and buried; and yet God saith, not, “*I was,*” or “*have been,*” but *I am the God of Abraham.* Now *God is not God of the dead, but of the living.* He is a living God, and communicates vital influences to those to whom he is a God. If, when Abraham died, there had been an end of him, there had been an end likewise of God's relation to him as his God; but at that time, when God spoke to Moses, he was the God of Abraham, and therefore Abraham must be then alive; which proves the immortality of the soul in a state of bliss; and that, by consequence, infers the resurrection of the body; for there is such an inclination in the human soul to its body, as would make a final and eternal separation inconsistent with the bliss of those that have God for *their God.* The Sadducees' notion was, that the union between body and soul is so close, that, when the body dies, the soul dies with it. Now, upon the same hypothesis, if the soul lives, as it certainly does, the body must some time or other live with it. And besides, the Lord is for the body, it is an essential part of the man; there is a covenant with the dust, which will be remembered, otherwise *the man* would not be happy. The charge which the dying patriarchs gave concerning their bones, and that *in faith,* was an evidence that they had some expectation of the resurrection of their bodies. But this doctrine was reserved for a more full revelation after the resurrection of Christ, who *was the first-fruits of them that slept.*

Lastly, We have the issue of this dispute. The Sadducees were *put to silence* (v. 34), and so put to shame. They thought by their subtlety to put Christ to shame, when they were preparing shame for themselves. But the multitude *were astonished at this doctrine,* v. 33.

1. Because it was new to them. See to what a sad pass the exposition of scripture was come among them, when people were astonished at it as a miracle to hear the fundamental promise applied to this great truth; they had sorry scribes, or this had been no news to them.
2. Because it had something in it very good and great. Truth often shows the brighter, and is the more admired, for its being opposed. Observe, Many gainsayers are silenced, and many hearers astonished, without being savingly converted; yet even in the silence and astonishment of unsanctified souls God magnifies his law, magnifies his gospel, and makes both honourable.

~~423~~ MATTHEW 22:34-40

THE SUBSTANCE OF THE COMMANDMENTS

Here is a discourse which Christ had with a Pharisee-lawyer, about the great commandment of the law. Observe,

I. The combination of the Pharisees against Christ, v. 34. They heard *that he had put the Sadducees to silence*, had stopped their mouths, though their understandings were not opened; and they were *gathered together*, not to return him the thanks of their party, as they ought to have done, for his effectually asserting and confirming of the truth against the Sadducees, the common enemies of their religion, but to *tempt him*, in hopes to get the reputation of puzzling him who had puzzled the Sadducees. They were more vexed that Christ was honoured, than pleased that the Sadducees were silenced; being more concerned for their own tyranny and traditions, which Christ opposed, than for the doctrine of the resurrection and a future state, which the Sadducees opposed. Note, It is an instance of Pharisaical envy and malice, to be displeased at the maintaining of a confessed truth, when it is done by those we do not like; to sacrifice a public good to private piques and prejudices. Blessed Paul was otherwise minded, ~~518~~Philippians 1:18.

II. The lawyer's question, which he put to Christ. The lawyers were students in, and teachers of, the law of Moses, as the scribes were; but some think that in *this* they differed, that they dealt more in practical questions than the scribes; they studied and professed casuistical divinity.

This lawyer *asked him a question, tempting him*; not with any design to ensnare him, as appears by St. Mark's relation of the story, where we find that this was he to whom Christ said, *Thou are not far from the kingdom of God*, ^{<4123>}Mark 12:34, but only to see what he would say, and to draw on discourse with him, to satisfy his own and his friends' curiosity.

1. The question was, *Master, which is the greatest commandment of the law?* A needless question, when all the things of God's law are great things (^{<3182>}Hosea 8:12), and the wisdom from above is without partiality, partiality in the law (^{<3119>}Malachi 2:9), and hath respect to them all. Yet it is true, there are some commands that are the principles of the oracles of God, more extensive and inclusive than others. Our Saviour speaks of the *weightier matters of the law*, ^{<4123>}Matthew 23:23.

2. The design was to try him, or tempt him; to try, not so much his knowledge as his judgment. It was a question disputed among the critics in the law. Some would have the law of circumcision to be the great commandment, others the law of the sabbath, others the law of sacrifices, according as they severally stood affected, and spent their zeal; now they would try what Christ said to this question, hoping to incense the people against him, if he should not answer according to the vulgar opinion; and if he should magnify one commandment, they would reflect on him as vilifying the rest. The question was harmless enough; and it appears by comparing ^{<4117>}Luke 10:27, 28, that it was an adjudged point among the lawyers, that the *love of God* and our *neighbour* is the great commandment, and the sum of all the rest, and Christ had there approved it; so the putting of it to him here seems rather a scornful design to catechise him as a child, than spiteful design to dispute with him as an adversary.

III. Christ's answer to this question; it is well for us that such a question was asked him, that we might have his answer. It is no disparagement to great men to answer plain questions. Now Christ recommends to us those as the great commandments, not which are so exclusive of others, but which are *therefore* great because inclusive of others. Observe,

1. Which these great commandments are (v. 37-39); not the judicial laws, those could not be the greatest now that the people of the Jews, to whom they pertained, were so little; not the ceremonial laws, those could not be the greatest, now that they were waxen old, and were ready to vanish

away; nor any particular moral precept; but the love of God and our neighbour, which are the spring and foundation of all the rest, which (these being supposed) will follow of course.

(1.) All the law is fulfilled in one word, and that is, *love*. See ~~4530~~ Romans 13:10. All obedience begins in the affections, and nothing in religion is done right, that is not done there first. Love is the leading affection, which gives law, and gives ground, to the rest; and therefore that, as the main fort, is to be first secured and garrisoned for God. Man is a creature cut out for love; thus therefore is the law written in the heart, that it is a *law of love*. Love is a short and sweet word; and, if that be *the fulfilling of the law*, surely the yoke of the command is very easy. Love is the rest and satisfaction of the soul; if we walk in this good old way, we shall find rest.

(2.) The *love of God* is the first and great commandment of all, and the summary of all the commands of the first table. The proper act of love being complacency, good is the proper object of it. Now God, being good infinitely, originally, and eternally, is to be loved in the first place, and nothing loved beside him, but what is loved for him. *Love* is the first and great thing that God demands from us, and therefore the first and great thing that we should devote to him.

Now here we are directed,

[1.] To love God as ours; *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God* as thine. The first commandment is, *Thou shalt have no other God*; which implies that we must have him for our God, and that will engage our love to him. Those that made the sun and moon their gods, loved them, ~~2480~~ Jeremiah 8:2; ~~1782~~ Judges 18:24. To love God as ours is to love him because he is ours, our Creator, Owner, and Ruler, and to conduct ourselves to him as ours, with obedience to him, and dependence on him. We must love God as reconciled to us, and made ours by covenant; that is the foundation of this, *Thy God*.

[2.] To love him *with all our heart, and soul, and mind*. Some make these to signify one and the same thing, to love him with all our powers; others distinguish them; the heart, soul, and mind, are the will, affections, and understanding; or the vital, sensitive, and intellectual faculties. Our love of God must be a sincere love, and not in word and tongue only, as theirs is who say they love him, but their hearts are not with him. It must be a strong love, we must love him in the most intense degree; as we must

praise him, so we must love him, with *all that is within us*, ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 103:1. It must be a singular and superlative love, we must love him more than any thing else; this way the stream of our affections must entirely run. The heart must be united to love God, in opposition to a divided heart. All our love is too little to bestow upon him, and therefore all the powers of the soul must be engaged for him, and carried out toward him. *This is the first and great commandment*; for obedience to this is the spring of obedience to all the rest; which is *then* only acceptable, when it flows from love.

(3.) To *love our neighbour as ourselves* is the *second* great commandment (v. 39); *It is like unto that first*; it is inclusive of all the precepts of the second table, as that is of the first. It is *like* it, for it is founded upon it, and flows from it; and a right love to our brother, whom we have seen, is both an instance and an evidence of our *love to God, whom we have not seen*, ~~1 John~~ 1 John 4:20.

[1.] It is implied, that we do, and should, love ourselves. There is a self-love which is corrupt, and the root of the greatest sins, and it must be put off and mortified: but there is a self-love which is natural, and the rule of the greatest duty, and it must be preserved and sanctified. We must love ourselves, that is, we must have a due regard to the dignity of our own natures, and a due concern for the welfare of our own souls and bodies.

[2.] It is prescribed, that we *love our neighbour as ourselves*. We must honour and esteem all men, and must wrong and injure none; must have a good will to all, and good wishes for all, and, as we have opportunity, must do good to all. We must love our neighbour as ourselves, as truly and sincerely as we love ourselves, and in the same instances; nay, in many cases we must deny ourselves for the good of our neighbour, and must make ourselves servants to the true welfare of others, and be willing to *spend and be spent for them, to lay down our lives for the brethren*.

2. Observe what the weight and greatness of these commandments is (v. 40); *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets*; that is, This is the sum and substance of all those precepts relating to practical religion which were written in men's hearts by nature, revived by Moses, and backed and enforced by the preaching and writing of the prophets. All hang upon the law of love; take away this, and all falls to the ground, and comes to nothing. Rituals and ceremonials must give way to these, as must all spiritual gifts, for love is the more excellent way. This is the spirit of

the law, which animates it, the cement of the law, which joins it; it is the root and spring of all other duties, the compendium of the whole Bible, not only of the law and the prophets, but of the gospel too, only supposing this love to be the fruit of faith, and that we love God in Christ, and our neighbour for his sake. All hangs on these two commandments, as the effect doth both on its efficient and on its final cause; for *the fulfilling of the law is love* (^{<6130>}Romans 13:10) and *the end of the law is love*, ^{<5015>}1 Timothy 1:5. The law of love is the nail, is the *nail in the sure place, fastened by the masters of assemblies* (^{<2121>}Ecclesiastes 12:11), on which is hung all *the glory of the law and the prophets* (^{<2324>}Isaiah 22:24), a nail that shall never be drawn; for on this nail all the glory of the new Jerusalem shall eternally hang. *Love never faileth*. Into these two great commandments therefore let our hearts be delivered as into a mould; in the defence and evidence of these let us spend our zeal, and not in notions, names, and strifes of words, as if those were the mighty things on which the law and the prophets hung, and to them the love of God and our neighbour must be sacrificed; but to the commanding power of these let every thing else be made to bow.

^{<424>}MATTHEW 22:41-46

THE PHARISEES SILENCED

Many questions the Pharisees had asked Christ, by which, though they thought to pose him, they did but *expose* themselves; but now let him ask them a question; and he will do it when they are gathered together, v. 41. He did not take some one of them apart from the rest (*ne Hercules contra duos — Hercules himself may be overmatched*), but, to shame them the more, he took them all together, when they were in confederacy and consulting against him, and yet puzzled them. Note, God delights to baffle his enemies when they most strengthen themselves; he gives them all the advantages they can wish for, and yet conquers them. *Associate yourselves, and you shall be broken in pieces*, ^{<2339>}Isaiah 3:9, 10. Now here,

I. Christ proposes a question to them, which they could easily answer; it was a question in their own catechism; “*What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He? Whose Son do you expect the Messiah to be, who was promised to the fathers?*” This they could easily answer, *The Son of David*.

It was the common periphrasis of the Messiah; they called him *the Son of David*. So the scribes, who expounded the scripture, had taught them, from ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 89:35, 36, *I will not lie unto David; his seed shall endure for ever* (~~Isaiah~~ Isaiah 9:7), *upon the throne of David*. And ~~Isaiah~~ Isaiah 11:1, *A rod out of the stem of Jesse*. The covenant of royalty made with David was a figure of the covenant of redemption made with Christ, who as David, was made King *with an oath*, and was first humbled and then advanced. If Christ was the Son of David, he was really and truly Man. Israel said, *We have ten parts in David*; and Judah said, *He is our bone and our flesh*; what part have we then in the Son of David, who took our nature upon him?

What think ye of Christ? They had put questions to him, one after another, out of the law; but he comes and puts a question to them upon the promise. Many are so full of the law, that they forget Christ, as if their duties would save them without his merit and grace. It concerns each of us seriously to ask ourselves, *What think we of Christ?* Some think not of him at all, he is not in all, not in any, of their thoughts; some think meanly, and some think hardly, of him; but *to them that believe he is precious; and how precious then are the thoughts of him!* While the daughters of Jerusalem think no more of Christ than of *another beloved*; the spouse thinks of him as *the Chief of ten thousands*.

II. He starts a difficulty upon their answer, which they could not easily solve, v. 43-45. Many can so readily affirm the truth, that they think they have knowledge enough to be proud of, who, when they are called to confirm the truth, and to vindicate and defend it, show they have ignorance enough to be ashamed of. The objection Christ raised was, *If Christ be David's son, how then doth David, in spirit, call him Lord?* He did not hereby design to ensnare them, as they did him, but to instruct them in a truth they were loth to believe — that the expected Messiah is God.

1. It is easy to see that David calls Christ *Lord*, and this in spirit being divinely inspired, and actuated therein by a spirit of prophecy; for it was *the Spirit of the Lord that spoke by him*, ~~2 Samuel~~ 2 Samuel 23:1, 2. David was one of those *holy men that spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*, especially in calling Christ *Lord*; for it was then, as it is still (~~1 Corinthians~~ 1 Corinthians 12:3) that *no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost*. Now, to prove that David, in spirit, called Christ *Lord*, he

quotes ^{<BIB>}Psalm 110:1, which psalm the scribes themselves understood of Christ; of him, it is certain, the prophet there speaks, of him and of no other man; and it is a prophetic summary of the doctrine of Christ, it describes him executing the offices of a Prophet, Priest, and King, both in his humiliation and also in his exaltation.

Christ quotes the whole verse, which shows the Redeemer in his exaltation;

(1.) *Sitting at the right hand of God.* His sitting denotes both rest and rule; his sitting at God's right hand denotes superlative honour and sovereign power. See in what great words this is expressed (^{<BIB>}Hebrews 8:1); *He is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty.* See ^{<BIB>}Philippians 2:9; ^{<BIB>}Ephesians 1:20. He did not take this honour to himself, but was entitled to it by covenant with his Father, and invested in it by commission from him, and here is that commission.

(2.) *Subduing his enemies.* There he shall sit, till they be all made either his friends or his footstool. *The carnal mind, wherever it is, is enmity to Christ;* and that is subdued in the *conversion of the willing people that are called to his foot* (as the expression is, ^{<BIB>}Isaiah 41:2), and in the confusion of his impenitent adversaries, who shall be brought under his foot, as the kings of Canaan were under the feet of Joshua.

But that which this verse is quoted for is, that David calls the Messiah *his Lord; the Lord, Jehovah, said unto my Lord.* This intimates to us, that in expounding scripture we must take notice of, and improve, not only that which is the main scope and sense of a verse, but of the words and phrases, by which they Spirit chooses to express that sense, which have often a very useful and instructive significance. Here is a good note from that word, *My Lord.*

2. It is not so easy for those who believe not the Godhead of the Messiah, to clear this from an absurdity, if Christ b David's son. It is incongruous for the father to speak of his son, the predecessor of his successor, as his *Lord.* If David call him *Lord,* that is laid down (v. 45) as the *magis notum* — *the more evident truth;* for whatever is said of Christ's humanity and humiliation must be construed and understood in consistency with the truth of his divine nature and dominion. We must hold this fast, that he is David's Lord, and by that explain his being David's son. The seeming differences of scripture, as here, may not only be accommodated, but

contribute to the beauty and harmony of the whole. *Amicae scripturarum lites, utinam et nostrae* — *The differences observable in the scriptures are of a friendly kind; would to God that our differences were of the same kind!*

III. We have here the success of this gentle trial which Christ made of the Pharisees' knowledge, in two things.

1. It puzzled them (v. 46); *No man was able to answer him a word.* Either it was their ignorance that they did not know, or their impiety that they would not own, the Messiah to be God; which truth was the only key to unlock this difficulty. What those Rabbies could not then answer, blessed be God, the plainest Christian that is led into the understanding of the gospel of Christ, can now account for; that Christ, as God, was David's *Lord*; and Christ, as Man, was David's *son*. This he did not now himself explain, but reserved it till the proof of it was completed by his resurrection; but we have it fully explained by him in his glory (⁶²⁶Revelation 22:16); *I am the root and the offspring of David.* Christ, as God, was David's *Root*; Christ, as Man, was David's *Offspring*. If we hold not fast this truth, that Jesus Christ is over all God blessed for ever, we run ourselves into inextricable difficulties. And well might David, his remote ancestor, call him *Lord*, when Mary, his immediate mother, after she had conceived him, *called him, Lord and God, her Saviour*, ⁴¹⁴⁵Luke 1:46, 47.

2. It silenced them, and all others that sought occasion against him; *Neither durst any man, from that day forth, ask him any more such captious, tempting, ensnaring questions.* Note, God will glorify himself in the silencing of many whom he will not glorify himself in the salvation of. Many are convinced, that are not converted, by the word. Had these been converted, they would have asked him more questions, especially that great question, *What must we do to be saved?* But since they could not gain their point, they would have no more to do with him. But, thus all that strive with their Master shall be convinced, as these Pharisees and lawyers here were, of the inequality of the match.