

# THE PROVOCATIVE PROPHET

**+** **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

In His responses to the challenges of the religious leaders, Jesus demonstrated His wisdom, authority, and mastery of the Scriptures.

**+** **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

Matthew 22

**+** **SETTING:**

After Jesus entered Jerusalem with the crowds cheering, Jesus had various encounters with the Pharisees and Sadducees throughout that week. Their goal was almost always to discredit Jesus; His goal was to teach about God and His kingdom. Jesus both answered and asked questions that showed that He had a mastery of the Word of God and that He also stood in authority over the Word of God. Jesus's teaching in Matthew 22 showed that He truly was the Messiah and foreshadowed His death and resurrection for the salvation of humanity.

# DAY 1

## READ:

**Matthew 22:1-14**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Matthew 22:11-14**

## NOTES

The parable of the wedding banquet is a parable that Jesus told in order to explain the invitation into the kingdom of heaven. The king's invitation to the initial guests was spurned, so he punished them and deemed them unworthy.

But then he invited those on the streets, both good and evil, and he filled his banquet hall with them. But he noticed one man dressed inappropriately for the party. Back then, at a party like this, a king would have supplied the proper attire for anyone lacking. But the man had apparently refused to wear the best of the best, and he offended the king, who then had him tied up and tossed out.

The conclusion of the parable is that “many are invited, but few are chosen.” The initial invitees represented the religious leaders and others who rejected Jesus. They were invited to the kingdom of heaven but chose to ignore the invitation, and some would even choose to act maliciously toward Jesus. Those on the road represented everyone else who chose to accept the invitation into the kingdom of heaven. But in order to come into the kingdom, you have to be dressed in the best of the best from the king. The appropriate attire for the kingdom of heaven is the righteousness of Jesus—without it, no one is able to enter (Romans 3:23-26).

The parable of the wedding banquet forces us to ask two questions of ourselves: have we received Jesus's invitation into the kingdom of God, and what are we trusting in to get us there, our righteousness or His?

**How are you responding to Jesus's invitation to the kingdom of heaven, and what are you relying on to get you there?**

# DAY 2

## READ:

Matthew 22:15-22

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

Matthew 22:19-22

## NOTES

The religious leaders were constantly trying to get Jesus to discredit Himself whenever He was in front of large crowds. In these verses, the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus with a question that supposedly posed a dilemma for Jesus. He would have to choose between supporting Rome, whom the Jews hated for capturing their homes, or breaking the law by not paying taxes. They believed Jesus would discredit Himself or implicate Himself as a lawbreaker.

Jesus's response to their question about paying taxes, however, did neither. Instead, He expressed the necessity to obey the governing authorities while also remaining faithful to God. It's generally possible to do both.

Jesus's response to the question posed by the Pharisees is not the only important thing to see in this story. It's also important to notice their response. They were amazed and went away. Even in their amazement at Jesus's response, they still didn't believe.

It is possible for us to be impressed with God—His standard for holiness, His miracles, His sending of Jesus to die and be raised from the grave—and simultaneously remain separated from God. Amazement does not equal salvation, nor does being in awe of God equal having a personal relationship with Him. We must pursue a relationship with God through Jesus by faith with the means of His Word, prayer, and obedience to living the way we've been called to live.

**How can we avoid being like the Pharisees—being amazed by Jesus but not following Him?**

# DAY 3

## READ:

**Matthew 22:23-46**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Matthew 22:29-32**

## NOTES



## KEY DOCTRINE #97: RESURRECTION

Both the Old and New Testaments teach that one day believers will experience a resurrection of the body from the dead (Isaiah 26:19; Ezekiel 37:12-14; John 11). The promise of the resurrection is found in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and it will take place at the future return of Christ. Because Christ was the firstfruits of the resurrection, Christians can be assured that their resurrection will be similar in nature, meaning it will be both bodily and glorious (Philippians 3:20-21; Romans 8:22-23). The hope of the future resurrection gives Christians confidence that death has been defeated in the death and resurrection of Christ.

The Sadducees were a very misguided group of Israelites. They only believed in the books of the Law, the first five books of the Old Testament. There was so much that they missed because of their lack of belief in the rest of Scripture. They, like the Pharisees, were constantly trying to get Jesus to discredit Himself in front of the crowds. In this story, they posed a ridiculous question to Jesus in order to get Him either to deny the resurrection or to affirm something that the law clearly didn't approve of, polyandry (a woman having multiple husbands).

Jesus said two things that astonished the crowd. One, He introduced a new teaching about eternity, that men and women will not be given in marriage in the eternal kingdom of God. And two, He used Scripture to affirm the resurrection—saying God is not the God of the dead but of the living.

One of Jesus's remarks to the Sadducees that should give us pause is when He told them that they didn't know the Scriptures nor the power of God. Jesus is the ultimate authority when it comes to the Word of God. We should never come to the Word of God arrogantly but with humility, being ready to learn about our Savior through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, along with those who have studied before us who have proven themselves trustworthy and faithful to the Spirit's illumination. There's always more to learn from God about God through His Word, and that knowledge leads to a deeper relationship with Him.

**Why is it important to affirm the truthfulness of all Scripture, not just the Scriptures we agree with?**

# DAY 4

## READ:

**Matthew 22:34-40**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Matthew 22:37-39**

## NOTES

## VOICES from THE CHURCH

“If we truly do love God with all of our heart and soul and mind, our entire person is focused on giving ourselves to him. We will not want to do anything contrary to his will for us. We will love our neighbors by giving ourselves to them, and if we truly love them, we will only do to them what is for their good. There is a great deal of freedom in that orientation toward the Bible.”<sup>1</sup>

—Michael J. Wilkins

When the Pharisees asked Jesus about which commandment in the law is the greatest, Jesus told them love for God is the greatest commandment, and the second commandment—to love others—is like the first. On those two commandments stand all of the Law and Prophets.

The word that Jesus used for “love” is the Greek word *agape*, which is the highest form of love. *Agape* love is a love that is not contingent on feelings and exists regardless of external circumstances. *Agape* love is like a diamond because it’s precious, valuable, rare, and difficult to destroy. Diamonds are beautiful symbols of commitment that are not easily obtained nor given away lightly.

Jesus calls us to love God with all that we have and all that we are, no matter how we feel or our external circumstances. The greatest two commandments in the Bible are commandments to love God and neighbor like Jesus loves. Jesus gave all of Himself in obedience to God in pursuit of humankind’s eternal salvation. Jesus did that by dying in our place on the cross and rising from the grave to give us life. Jesus’s life, death, burial, and resurrection should cause us to stand amazed at the salvation He offers and give us a deep desire to love Him as He calls us to in His Word.

**How does Jesus’s example of *agape* love stir a desire in us to love God and our neighbor the same way He did?**

# DAY 5

## READ:

**Matthew 22:41-46**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Matthew 22:41-46**

## NOTES

The Pharisees and Sadducees lived their lives as if they stood in authority over the Word of God. The Sadducees took away Scripture that they didn't like, and the Pharisees added to Scripture things that they thought made them more spiritual and religious. Both groups, while not always entirely wrong, believed things that led them to error. One of the main errors was missing that the Messiah was right in front of them.

In this passage, Jesus showed the Pharisees that He is the authority over the Word by pointing out a reality that left them speechless. The Messiah is both the Son of God—David's Lord—and He is the son of David, from the lineage of David. The revelation that the Messiah was both God and man left the Pharisees speechless. So speechless that they dared not question Him again.

The Pharisees worked hard to master the Word of God. But they still missed that the Word made flesh was in their presence. Their adding to Scripture made their understanding devoid of truth. We must be careful not to do the same thing with the Word of God. If we attempt to add to or take away from the Word of God, we fall into error and leave our understanding devoid of truth. So we must live in submission to the Word of God, seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit so that we can see Jesus for who He truly is.

**How does living in submission to the Word of God help us avoid errors in our understanding and beliefs about Jesus?**

# GROUP

NOTES

## VOICES from THE CHURCH

“The important question is, what relationships are important in the afterlife? These decisions are made on this side of death. The doctrine of the resurrection should spur us on to evangelism so that many more people may enjoy the pleasures of a continuing relationship with God, a relationship that is not limited by death.”<sup>2</sup>

—Joe Kapolyo

**POINT 1: Jesus affirms the reality of resurrection** (Matthew 22:23-33).

### KEY DOCTRINE #97: RESURRECTION

Both the Old and New Testaments teach that one day believers will experience a resurrection of the body from the dead (Isaiah 26:19; Ezekiel 37:12-14; John 11). The promise of the resurrection is found in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and it will take place at the future return of Christ. Because Christ was the firstfruits of the resurrection, Christians can be assured that their resurrection will be similar in nature, meaning it will be both bodily and glorious (Philippians 3:20-21; Romans 8:22-23). The hope of the future resurrection gives Christians confidence that death has been defeated in the death and resurrection of Christ.

**?** What are some practical ways the truth of the resurrection should give believers hope?

Belief in the resurrection is valid because it is seen in God’s Word.

**?** From Day 3: **Why is it important to affirm the truthfulness of all Scripture, not just the Scriptures we agree with?**

**POINT 2: Jesus clarifies the centrality of love** (Matthew 22:34-40).

Being tested, Jesus confirms that the greatest commandment is to love God with our all.

**?** How can we love God with all our heart, soul, and mind?

Jesus said that loving others as ourselves is the second greatest command.

**?** Why is loving others like ourselves so difficult?

**POINT 3: Jesus claims the authority of the Messiah** (Matthew 22:41-46).

The promised Messiah would be a victorious King and a Suffering Servant; He would be a human Son of David and the divine Son of God.

Jesus fulfilled the prophecies about the Messiah, teaching the Word of God with authority, because He is the Messiah.

**?** Why do you believe Jesus is the Messiah?

## MY RESPONSE

Because we have experienced God's kindness to us in salvation through Jesus, we live under the Word of God's authority in all areas of our lives with gratitude and joy.

- **HEAD:** What are some of the dangers of making ourselves the authority over God's Word?
- **HEART:** How do we let Scripture have authority over our worship?
- **HANDS:** How can you live in submission to God's Word this week so that others may see Christ in you?



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

## VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"I want the whole Christ for my Savior, the whole Bible for my book, the whole Church for my fellowship, and the whole world for my mission field."<sup>3</sup>

—John Wesley (1703–1791)