

Pentecost XXIII: Matthew 22:34-46: Jesus' Final Encounter With the Pharisees

1. The suggested text for this day is listed as Mt. 22:34-40 (41-46). In our opinion the two paragraphs are related. They constitute one incident and, furthermore, are related in thought. It occurred on Tuesday of holy week. It was Jesus' final word to the Sanhedrists. He would face them only once more, at His trial. Vss. 34-30 are paralleled at Mk. 12:28-31 but not at Lk. 10:25-28. Vss. 41-46 are paralleled at Mk. 12:35-37 and Lk. 20:41-44. Mark gives a fuller account of vss. 34-40.
2. Vs. 34: Jesus' altercation with the Sanhedrists began at 21:23. There the text mentions the chief priests and the elders. At vs. 45 the text speaks of chief priests and the Pharisees. At 22:15 we have the Pharisees. At 22:23 it's the Sadducees. And our text, vss. 34-46, involves the Pharisees. They had heard that Jesus muzzled the Sadducees. Evidently they were happy about that. And now they gathered together ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό, a difficult phrase which very likely means "at the same place for a concerted effort". Evidently they decided to have one of their law-authorities (Matthew calls him a νομικός, Mark a γραμματεὺς) ask Him a question. The Sadducees accepted only the laws in the Torah. The Pharisees added many precepts to these OT laws. What does πειράζων mean? Does it merely mean "to test", asking for an opinion against the Sadducees? Thus Lenski. Or does it mean that they "tried to trap him". Thus TEV, Fahling, Ylvisaker and Stoeckhardt, with the added thought that if Jesus would prefer one commandment to any other He could be accused of setting part of the Law against another part. AV has "tempting him". NKJV has "testing him". RSV, NIV, NEB, AAT, NASB read "to test him", which leaves it to the reader to decide whether it was friendly or unfriendly. These notes prefer TEV: "to trap him".
3. Vs. 35: The sense of the question is: "Which particular injunction is the greatest in the Torah?"
4. Vs. 36: Both here and in vs. 39 ἀγαπήσεις stands first. The future indicative is the strongest imperative. God gives man no choice. κύριον τῶν θεῶν is the standard NT term for the Covenant God of the OT. Cf. Lk. 1:68 and 20:37. It denotes the saving God who gave His chosen people His διαθήκη to save them. σου is the genitive of relationship. Note that it, like ἀγαπήσεις, is singular number and σου is repeated three times in this vs. It is an individual matter. Now follows three ἐν phrases which denote means and manner. Note that forms of ὅλος occur three times: "With your heart in its entirety, with your soul in its entirety, with your mind in its entirety." καρδιά denotes the innermost personality, ψυχή, the soul or life, and δῆλον, the mind, the reasoning part of man. Remarkably the body (σῶμα) is not mentioned but it needn't be. Man in his entirety must be devoted to God. How can that be? Look at I Jn. 4:19: "We love because He first loved us." (The preferred reading does not have "God" or "Him" as object.) I Jn. 4:16 reads: "God is love, and he who remains in love remains in God and God remains in him." God is love and His requirement is that man be love. On this sentence cf. Deut. 6:5; 10:12; 11:1,13,22; 30:19,20. The word "love" pervades Deuteronomy. Paul says (Rom. 13:10): "Love is the fulfilling of the Law." Fahling: "Not as if the commandment of love should be counted as an individual precept, but as indicating the spirit which must underlie all obedience."
5. Vs. 38: This injunction is the greatest and first in order. Lenski remarks: "By this commandment, therefore, all the other commandments and the many regulations given to the Jews through Moses are to be weighed and gauged." It is not separate but all inclusive. All the commentators state what is summarized by Fahling: "The rabbinic schools had come to the conclusion that there were at least 613 different ordinances: 248 affirmative precepts, which corresponded to the parts of the human body, and 365 negative precepts, corresponding to the days of the year, the total 613, the number of Hebrew letters in the Decalog." But by adding many precepts to the commandments in the Torah,

they had a set of laws which were completely loveless. Only the regenerate can understand what Jesus means in vss. 37-38. Cf. Lk. 7:47 and Gal. 2:20. To know Christ by faith is the door to love. To love God with one's whole being means to trust in Him and His promises because Jesus died for us. It makes a person spiritual and causes him to walk in the Spirit. Gal. 5:25. Vs. 37 is the second use of the Law in the sense that it reminds us that we often fail to love God with an undivided heart, soul, and mind. But it is also the third use of the Law in the sense that it reminds us of what God wills in us toward Him.

6. Vs. 39: Read Lev. 19:18,34 in their entirety. Vengeance is ruled out. And the lowly non-Jew was to be loved just as was the Jew. The atonement underlies vs. 37. And the atonement underlies vs. 39. Bengel: "The love of our neighbor resembles the love of God more than all the other duties. . . . The lawyer might easily omit the latter (love toward neighbor), whilst anxious about the former (love toward God). Our Lord guards him from that danger, and answers more than he had asked." True. The lawyer asked only for the greatest. Jesus answers that it is not possible to have the one without the other. Fahling: "As referring to their object, God and the neighbor, the words might be divided into two commandments, but their essential demand is the same--love." Ylvisaker: "The one may not, in truth, be fulfilled without the other. True love toward God, according to the first table, must manifest itself in love toward the neighbor, in accordance with the second." Stoeckhardt: "Jesus gave them a simple plain answer by declaring the law of love to God, Deut. 6:5, as the greatest commandment, and added that the law of love to our neighbor, Lev. 19:18,34, was like it, and that the whole law was summarized in these two commandments, so that all commandments were of equal importance and validity." In vs. 39 σου, the singular, is the genitive of relationship. ὥς means "as truly" or "to the extent that". The verb to be supplied after ὥς is indicative, not imperative. You can't read an imperative after ὥς. It isn't grammatical. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, it is remarkable that Jesus speaks only of love toward neighbor, though the lawyer had stated the requirement of love toward God and neighbor (Lk. 10:25-37). It is remarkable that in Gal. 5:14 Paul says: "The whole law is summarized in one sentence: "You will love your neighbor as (you love) yourself." See also James 2:8. A loveless attitude toward neighbor betrays a loveless attitude toward God.
7. Vs. 40: "On these two injunctions the Law in its entirety, as well as the Prophets, hangs." The word "love" summarizes God's revelation and will toward man. This is such a simple but profound truth. It swept aside all the arguments between the Sadducees and Pharisees. It swept aside all the arguments among the Pharisees themselves. It is so simple and is followed by simple, repentant sinners. Even the malefactor (Lk. 23:39-43) loved God and man. He reminded the other malefactor of the truth (vss. 40-41). That's love. Jesus Himself is the greatest example of love. The Pharisees, through their spokesman, tried to trap Jesus. He tries to draw His enemies to Himself by what He says.
8. And now, a problem. At this point read Mk. 12:32-34. This reaction on the part of the scribe is not recorded in Matthew. It brings up several questions: a) Has Matthew given this incident an entirely different character than has Mark? Higher critics have suggested this but we reject it immediately. All agree that the two accounts are parallel. Therefore, if that is so, they cannot differ in character. b) Did the Pharisees send this lone scribe in a friendly mood? Lenski thinks so. He says: "To make the motive of the Pharisees the desire to entangle Jesus, as had been done in the previous attacks on him, is rather unsatisfactory. The outcome of the present questioning is entirely too friendly for that. Mk. 13:34." We reject this explanation because the word πειράζων is used of the scribe in vs. 35. He did not come as an honest inquirer but to trap Jesus. c) The only other explanation is that the Pharisees were thwarted through the very person whom they sent to ask Jesus a question. It is similar

to an incident in Jn. 7:32-49. The chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to arrest Jesus. But they came back empty-handed. They did not arrest Jesus because they were deeply impressed by what Jesus said. Likewise here in Mt. 22, the Pharisees used this scribe to trap Jesus. But the result was contrary to their expectations. The scribe agreed with Jesus. Stoeckhardt remarks: "The scribe, who had asked, now talked sensibly and not as when he began, confirming and repeating what Jesus had stated. The Lord's answer had brought him to his senses, gaining confidence in the doctrine of this Master of Israel, and began to think that this might be the Messiah. Since this is a sign of faith, Jesus assured him that he was not far from the kingdom, in fact that he already belonged to it, because divine truth has always the power to change the heart of the enemies of the Gospel." In the crucifixion of Jesus Satan used all his might to overthrow Jesus but God used that incident to conquer sin, Satan and death. Paul left Jerusalem for Damascus to persecute Christians, but entered Damascus as a Christian.

9. Vs. 41: Quite obviously in vs. 34 the Pharisees gathered together to plot against Jesus. Their plot failed. And we think that the genitive absolute with which vs. 41 begins means: "While the Pharisees were still together." Thus AAT. Jesus' enemies were still there and before they disbanded He had just one more question to ask them. Jesus does not return evil for evil. He is still inviting His enemies. Ylvisaker says: "In advance and in public He now definitely proves out of the OT the divine nature of the Messiah, and anticipates, as it were, through Scriptural proof, the accusation for blasphemy upon which His conviction would be based. And with this word, Jesus concludes for all time His negotiations with the Pharisees and with His other opponents." Jesus' first disciples acknowledged Him as the Messiah, Jn. 1:41. Jesus revealed Himself as the Messiah to the woman of Samaria, Jn. 4:25,26. But Jesus did not use the term "Messiah" of Himself among the unbelieving Covenant people because they had the wrong idea of the kind of Messiah He ought to be, Jn. 6:15. He did reveal Himself to His disciples as the Messiah. Read Mt. 16:13-20. But He warned the disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Messiah, vs. 20. In December of the year before Jesus was crucified, a matter of about four months, the Jews encircled Jesus in the temple and said: "If you are the Messiah, tell us openly." Jn. 10:24. He answered: "I have told you but you don't believe. The works which I perform in My Father's Name, these testify concerning Me. However, you do not believe because you are not of My sheep." The miracles of Jesus were proof enough of His Messiahship but they rejected these miracles and therefore also His person. But on this Tuesday, just three days before His trial, He asks them an important question about Himself. Now read Mt. 26:63-66. He was charged with calling Himself the Messiah, the Son of God. That led to His death. But here in Mt. 22:42-45 Jesus confronts them with the all-important question. He throws out a life-line to His enemies. And it is done in a simple but loving manner. What He had told them in vss. 37-40 would do them no good at all if they refused to come to faith in the Messiah. They would remain dead in their trespasses.
10. Vs. 42: "What is your opinion concerning the Messiah? Whose son is He?" The answer to the first question depends on the answer to the second question. The Pharisees answer: "He is the son of the (well-known) David." At this point read Jn. 7:40-43, where the term "the Messiah" occurs three times. That He would be a descendant of David is clearly stated but so long as there was confusion as to His true identity, people remained in unbelief. On Calvary people made fun of the term "the Messiah". See Lk. 23:35,39. But here in Mt. 22 Jesus gives His enemies a final opportunity. But they would go no farther than to say that Jesus was descended from David.
11. Vs 43: οὐν, "in view of your answer" which is true as far as it goes, but is not enough. Πῶς means "how can it be that etc." ἐν πνεύματι is translated "in spirit" in the AV which is not so good as NKJV: "in the Spirit". All our translations, though rendering it in different ways, give the sense of

the NKJV. It is plain from the context that: a) The Pharisees acknowledge the Davidic authorship of Ps. 110; b) They believed in the doctrine of the inspiration of the OT; c) They believed that Ps 110 was Messianic. Read the whole Psalm. Vs. 1 is quoted 16 times in the NT, vs. 4 nine times and vs. 5 once. The whole Psalm speaks of Jesus' person, His work and His total victory over all His enemies. David surely knew that He was prophesying concerning the Messiah. Jesus must have included David when He spoke Lk. 10:24. While David was king, no mere human being was above him and he conquered his enemies. But, in prophecy, he acknowledged One greater than himself.

12. Vs. 44: The LXX is quoted verbatim. In the first line we have two occurrences of κύριος, clearly denoting two persons. In Hebrew the first is Jehovah and the second Adon. Greek cannot distinguish and therefore uses κύριος for both. All our translations have Lord-Lord except LB which has God-Lord, an attempt to imitate the Hebrew. μου is genitive of relationship. David acknowledged Jesus as his Lord. In Hebrew κυριω μου is rendered Adonai. The second line is a command or an invitation. Here μου refers back to the first occurrence of κύριος, genitive of possession, the right hand, of course, denoting power. In the third line we have σου, objective genitive "the personal enemies who hate you". Bengel remarks: "The eternity of the session is not denied, but it is denied that the assault of the enemies will interfere with it. The warlike kingdom will come to an end. The peaceful kingdom, however, will have no end. I Cor. 15:25 etc." On the word θω Bengel says: "The enemies will lie prostrate." On ἐχθροῦς he remarks: "among them the Pharisees." And on "footstool" he adds: "The enemies will themselves be the footstool of Christ by right of conquest. Cf. Josh. 10:24; Ps. 47:3." The fourth line involves an anthropomorphism. σου is genitive of possession. And though ποδῶν is an anthropomorphism, it reminds us that God, in Christ, became true man. David was speaking of the exaltation of Jesus' human nature. His divine nature was already exalted.
13. Vs. 45: οὖν, "in view of this plain prophecy which you accept". This vs. is a fact or particular condition. The protasis must be answered with "yes" or "no". Here it means: "If, as you must admit, David calls Him Lord." αὐτὸν κύριον is an instance of predicate accusative which can be resolved into "He is Lord". πῶς is used again as in vs. 43 "how can it be that etc." υἱὸς refers to Jesus, a descendant of David. αὐτοῦ is genitive of relationship, referring to David. NKJV and AAT wrongly capitalize "Son". AV, RSV, NIV, JB, NEB and NASB rightly have "son". TEV reads "David's descendant". NKJV and AAT leave the impression that Jesus received His divinity by descent, human descent. The point, of course, is that Jesus is the God-man, God and man in one person. Bengel remarks: "It is considerably more evident of Christ that He is the Lord than that He is the Son of David. . . . David as well as Abraham (Jn. 8:56) saw the day of Christ, the last great day we may suppose, when all His adversaries shall become the Lord's footstool." Fahling: "The Messiah is the Son of God and the Son of Man. According to His human nature He is David's son, but according to the divine nature He is David's Lord. But Jesus did not press the point. His believing followers and the common people who heard Him gladly, understood. The adversaries, however, had hardened their hearts." Ylvisaker: "If Jesus had added further proof of His Messiahship, the Pharisees would not have been moved thereby to recognize Him. Jesus knew this only too well. For they were hardened in their hearts against Jesus in word and deed." That thought reminds us of Lk. 16:31. Jesus used the Word to bring people to faith. If they rejected that, there was no hope. Stoeckhardt says: "Our Lord was the Victor in all the disputes with His adversaries." Lenski remarks: "They (the Pharisees) dared not say that he was NOT to be David's son; they knew that he would be. They dared not deny David's inspired word that the Messiah would at the same time be David's Lord and thus very God. Yet, the Pharisees would not admit the Messiah's deity."
14. Vs. 46: This vs. has a note of utter finality. None of Jesus' adversaries were able to find fallacies in His teaching. The Word of God has muzzled them. Note the triple negative: "No one was able

to answer Him a word nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him no longer." Multiple negatives of the same kind (here forms of οὐ) make the negative emphatic. Of course we know that the disciples did, after this, answer Him and ask Him questions. The point here is that henceforth no adversary dared try to trap or criticize Him. Bengel says: "'To question' with the object of tempting Him; the disciples questioned Him with the object of learning. A new scene, as it were, opens from this point." Fahling: "They did not dare to ask any more questions, because then the truth against which they rebelled would have been brought out." Mark (12:37) adds this remark: "And the common people heard him gladly." On which Stoeckhardt remarks: "All that the Lord had told the elders of the people was wholesome instruction for all the people on this last day of His public teaching activity, giving solutions to the most serious questions."

15. Jesus began by profession that God was His Father (Lk. 2:49; Jn. 2:16). And He ended by declaring Himself the Lord of David.