

## Lesson 17 – Jesus Challenged

Text: Matthew 21:19-22:46; Mark 11:19-37; Luke 20:1-44; 21:37-38

Main Characters: God, Jesus, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians

### Key Passages:

- Matthew 21:45-46 – The tension between the Jews and Jesus climaxed as he took them on directly.
- Matthew 22:46 – After answering their tests, no one dared to ask Jesus any more questions.

### Main Storyline:

The next day (what would have been Tuesday of Jesus' last week before his crucifixion), Jesus and the disciples returned to the temple after staying the night in the Mount of Olives (Jesus did this every night according to Luke 21:27-38). As they passed by the fig tree which Jesus had cursed the day before, the disciples noticed that it had completely withered away and were amazed. Jesus taught them that they should have faith in God. He said that if someone would pray for something, truly believing that God could bring it about, he would have whatever he had requested. Jesus also warned that they should be willing to forgive.

When Jesus arrived in the temple at Jerusalem, the Jewish chief priests and elders confronted him, asking Jesus to reveal who had given him the authority to do and say the things he was doing and saying. Jesus agreed to answer their question if they would first answer his question, "The baptism of John, where was it from? Was it from heaven or from men?" The Jews knew that either answer would be trouble for them, so they answered that they did not know. Jesus replied that he would neither tell them the answer to their question. Jesus went on to tell two parables which were very transparently condemning the Pharisees and other ruling Jews. When the Pharisees and others heard them and realized what Jesus was saying, they wanted to kill Jesus, but they were afraid of the people because they knew Jesus was a prophet.

Jesus went on to give another parable about a king who had arranged a marriage for his son. The parable was very similar to the one Jesus told in Luke 14:15-24, and it had a similar message: the Jews would be rejected from the kingdom of God and others would be invited instead. The ruling Jews decided to get together and try to figure out a way to trap Jesus in his words.

First, the Pharisees sent some of their own with the Herodians (another Jewish sect) to try to trap Jesus. They asked him a very politically charged question, "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" If Jesus said it was not lawful, the Romans would have taken issue with him, but if Jesus had said it was lawful, the Jewish people would have become very angry with him (as they hated the Romans and Caesar). Jesus, seeing the situation, asked for a Roman coin and asked, "Whose image is [on the coin]?" When the people answered that it was Caesar's, he said, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." The Pharisees and Herodians were amazed by his answer and left.

Next, the Sadducees (who did not believe in a resurrection) came and asked Jesus a very convoluted question about marriage and the afterlife. They wanted to know whose wife a woman would be in the resurrection if she had been married to seven different men during her life. The purpose of the question seems to have been to ridicule the idea of a resurrection. Jesus not only answered their question (there is no marriage in the resurrection), but further showed that there was a resurrection using Exodus 3:6 (focusing on the nuance of "I AM" versus "I was" – Abraham still existed well after his death). The people were astonished.

Next, a scribe came and asked about the greatest commandment. Jesus pointed out that the greatest commandment was to love the Lord with all one's heart, soul, and mind. The second was that one should love his neighbor as himself. On those two commandments, Jesus said, hang the whole law and prophets.

Finally, Jesus decided to ask the Pharisees a question about Psalm 110 (a Messianic prophecy). No one could answer Jesus' question. From that day on, no one dared question Jesus anymore.

### Lessons/Applications:

- 1.) We must have faith in God when we ask for things in prayer; if we seek, we shall find (Matthew 7:7-8).
- 2.) The Word of God has the answers to the questions of life; we must simply be willing to listen.