



## Lesson 8

### Chapter 22: Conflict with Pharisees and Sadducees

#### The Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-13)

Matthew links this parable with that of the tenants in the vineyard (see Lesson 7). Jesus had told the Jews that *'the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits'*. The Jewish rulers understood that Jesus was talking about them (Matt. 21:45) and tried to arrest him. Jesus now reinforces this vital message with the parable of the wedding feast.

The parable shows both God's longsuffering and care for His people Israel and also how badly they treated God's servants, disciples who would preach the good news of the kingdom. It is difficult to understand and it will help us if we first read these words from the book of Revelation.

"Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"- for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."  
(Revelation 19:6-9)

In the parable Jesus says that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a wedding feast prepared by a king for his son. He sent out invitations to the guests but those invited were too busy with everyday things of life to attend, so they missed their opportunity. The king then invited others instead but one man turned up without the wedding garment provided for him to wear. The king was angry and told his servants to throw him out. Still more came clothed with their wedding garments and were accepted by the king.

The king (God) invited wedding guests (Israel) to the marriage of his son (Jesus). He sent out his servants (Jesus' disciples) to invite them to the wedding, many were not interested (read Matt.10:6-7, 22). Again the king sent out servants to invite guests, these servants told the guests that the feast was prepared. Some of those who were invited (Jews who wanted to keep the Law and their own traditions) seized the king's servants (apostles) and even killed some of them.

In verse 7 Jesus warned them that those who rejected the offer of the Kingdom of Heaven were accountable for their actions. The city (Jerusalem) would be besieged by armies and burned with fire (Forty years later, in AD70 this happened exactly as Jesus had said). By their rejection of the Gospel message about the Kingdom of God, the Jews were found unworthy. Therefore after the destruction of the city the king invited others to come to the feast. The invitation of the Gospel message went out to the Gentiles.

The king came to see the guests who had responded to the invitation. One guest was not wearing a wedding garment, although he had declared himself to be a disciple of Jesus, he did not try to follow the Lord's example in his life, he was not a true disciple. It is those who truly believe and who try to follow the example of their Lord who are clothed with the righteousness that God provides and given a place in His kingdom.

#### Many are Called (22:14)

We are told that God does not want anyone to perish - to die without the hope of the kingdom (2 Peter 3:9). God wants all people to accept His gracious offer of salvation for *"God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish"*.

However most reject this, as the Pharisees did. So *"few are chosen"*.





### Questions (22:15-40)

Much of the rest of the chapter is about rival groups of religious Jews trying to trap Jesus in his words. The Pharisees tried first. If Jesus had simply said 'Yes, it is right to pay tax to the Romans', the Pharisees could have said he was a supporter of the hated Roman people who were ruling over Israel. If he had said 'No', they could have reported him to the Roman authorities as a trouble maker. His answer shows that we should obey both God and our human rulers (when their orders do not conflict with our duty to God – see Acts 4:19 and 5:29). Romans 13:1-7 shows how we should submit to our governments and obey the laws of our country which include paying taxes.

However, when the Lord Jesus spoke about giving to Caesar and giving to God, he was referring to two different images. The coin had Caesar's image but people bear God's image (Genesis 1:26). Just as Caesar had to be accepted and taxes paid to him, so people need to respect and serve God. This applies to us as well as the people of Jesus' time.

The Sadducees then tried to trick Jesus. They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead and mocked it by their question. Jesus told them that they were ignorant about Bible teaching and about God's power to raise people. The dead will certainly rise again. Those that are raised and given everlasting life will be made like the angels who do not marry.

Jesus explained that the certainty of the resurrection was shown in the way that God spoke of Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This did not mean that they still existed, they were dead and their bodies had returned to the dust. However, their resurrection to immortal life is certain, which is why God spoke of them in this way. God's plan for their future requires them to live again. They must be raised from the dead and given eternal life so that they can inherit the land forever as God has promised them.

Then a lawyer asked Jesus a question about which was the greatest commandment in the Law. Jesus showed how all of the Ten Commandments can be summarised in answer he gave. He quoted from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18.

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:36-40)

Jesus teaches us that loving the Lord God with every part of our being and loving our neighbour as our self are the most important commands in the Law and are the basis for everything he did and taught in the New Testament.

### Jesus – Son of David (22:41-46)

Finally Jesus asked them a question, '*Whose son would the Christ be?*' They answered correctly when they said that Christ would be the son of David, so he asked another question, quoting from Psalm 110:1. In this psalm David calls his future Son, 'Lord', yet the Jews did not think any son could be greater than his father.

Although Jesus was the Son of David through his mother, Mary, he was also the Son of God. So he was far greater than his forefather, David. Look at what this Psalm says about him.

"The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.'" (Psalm 110:1)

The word LORD in capital letters is used in the Old Testament for the name of God – 'Jehovah' or 'Yahweh'. So God is inviting Jesus to sit at His right hand in heaven until all his enemies were overthrown. It was a prophecy written by David who was inspired by God.

The chapter ends by telling us that no-one dare ask Jesus any further questions. This is the end of his public ministry and he has silenced all his opponents.



### Angels do not marry!

It is useful to note that verse 30 says that angels do not marry. Many people wrongly believe that a wicked angel came to the earth and married a human, and they call this being 'satan' or the 'devil'. Nowhere in Scripture does it say that this happened, although they often think Genesis 6:2 provides the idea because the phrase 'sons of God' is used.

But believers are called sons, or children, of God in places like 1 John 3:1, 2. Genesis 6 tells us that the godly line of Seth's descendants (called 'the sons of God') intermarried with the wicked descendants of Cain (called 'the daughters of man') and so the earth became corrupt and full of violence and God sent the great flood.

People who think that 'Lucifer' or the 'Day Star' of Isaiah 14:12 is a supernatural evil being should read all of Isaiah 14 which clearly shows it is about the king of Babylon (see verse 4) and calls him a man (verse 16).

Ezekiel 28 is also sometimes used to support this wrong idea but this chapter is about the king of Tyre.

We should not accept what people tell us about the Bible without checking for ourselves!

## Chapter 23: Woe to you Hypocrites!

### Jesus Condemns the Scribes and Pharisees (23:1-15)

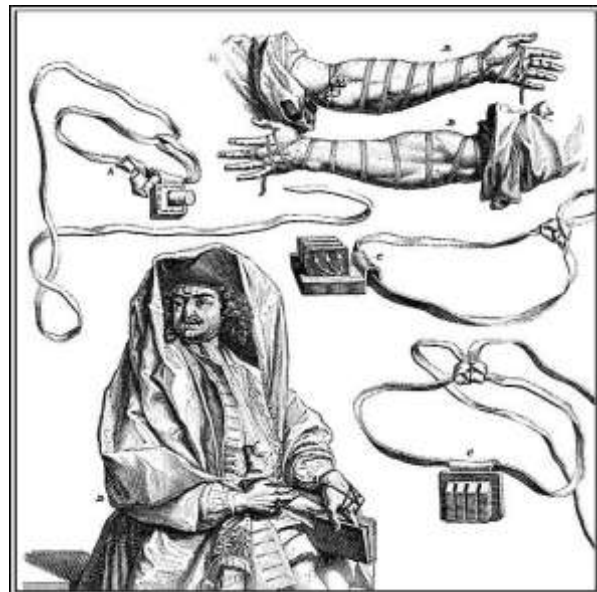
After Jesus had silenced the Pharisees and teachers of the Law, he turned to his disciples and the common people and showed how wrong their spiritual leaders were.

They wanted people to follow their strict rules but did not keep them themselves. They completely failed to show compassion and to help those who found it difficult to keep these rules. They were proud and wanted people to think they were good and important.

They liked to be called 'Rabbi', a Hebrew word meaning 'my great one' or 'master'.

The phylacteries (verse 5) were little boxes containing scripture verses, worn on the forehead and arm when praying. The Jews were very proud of these.

The contrast between what the leaders did and what God wanted is shown in Deuteronomy 6:8 where we see what this custom should have meant to them. God showed Israel that they should remember Him in all they did and talk to their children about Him.



"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.  
You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.  
And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.  
You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.  
You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."  
(Deuteronomy 6:4-9)



**More about the Religious Leaders (23:16-24)**

The scribes and Pharisees were more concerned with material things and with trying to look righteous, rather than showing the qualities that God requires. Verse 23 shows how they liked people to know that they kept the Law even in small matters, such as giving God a tithe (a tenth) of their herbs and spices, but they ignored the more important things. They were just like the Old Testament Jewish leaders who had opposed and killed God's prophets.

Jesus repeatedly called them hypocrites because they pretended to serve God and give Him glory, but really they wanted others to give them glory. We should be careful that we do not behave like them.

CHECK LIST	
<p><b>Do we:</b></p> <p>Fail to do what we know is right (verses 3, 4)?</p> <p>Do things 'to be seen of men' (verse 5)?</p> <p>Want to be important (verses 6, 7, 10)?</p> <p>Seek money (verses 14, 25)?</p> <p>Make pretence of our religion (verses 14, 25, 28)?</p>	<p><b>OR do we:</b></p> <p>Serve others (verse 11)?</p> <p>Behave humbly (verse 12)?</p> <p>Show faith (verse 23)?</p> <p>Show mercy (verse 23)?</p> <p>Try to have 'clean' thoughts (verse 26)?</p>

**Appearing 'Clean' on the Outside (23:25-36)**

These religious leaders made every effort to appear 'clean', or righteous, but inside they were full of wickedness. They were greedy and wanted to please themselves, and were even lawless. It is easy to fall into the same trap of wanting people to know all the good things we do. Jesus spoke out about this in Matthew 6:1:

"Beware of practising your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven."

The Law that God gave to Moses taught that people should not touch dead bodies or graves:

"Whoever in the open field touches someone who was killed with a sword or who died naturally, or touches a human bone or a grave, shall be unclean seven days."  
(Numbers 19:16)

For centuries people did not realise that this simple rule kept the people of Israel healthy by saving them from harmful bacteria associated with disease and decay. A person who touched a dead body could not take part in a feast. Because of this, graves near Jerusalem were often painted white so that travellers to the Passover feast could avoid them. Jesus told the religious leaders that they were just like these graves – they looked good on the outside but were full of all uncleanness!

Jesus warned them of the destruction that would come. He knew they would persecute those who were true worshippers. It is interesting to note that Saul, who later became the Apostle Paul, was a Pharisee. Some Pharisees were sincere and willing to change their thinking.

**The Loving Concern of Jesus for Jerusalem (23:37-39)**

The hard-hearted, hypocritical attitude of most Pharisees contrasts with the love and concern of Jesus for Jerusalem and its people in verse 37. Like his Father, Jesus wanted to save the people, but they would not listen to his warnings. The city where God had chosen to set His throne did not accept His Son and soon afterwards its people demanded his death.

As a result of this, Jerusalem would be destroyed and its people either killed or taken away as slaves as we shall see in the next lesson.

However Jesus will indeed return to Jerusalem and make it the capital of God's kingdom, yet this will not happen until the Jewish people are ready to acknowledge him as their Messiah and welcome him as their king.





## Chapter 24: Signs of the End of the Age

### The Magnificent Temple (24:1, 2)

The disciples drew Jesus' attention to the magnificent Temple buildings that King Herod had built for the Jews. They were certainly a wonderful sight. However, Jesus told them that every stone would be thrown down and Jerusalem would be completely destroyed.

### Signs about the Destruction of the Temple and the End of the Age (24:3-28)

The disciples were shocked to learn that the Temple was to be destroyed so they asked Jesus when it would happen and what would be the sign of his coming. Jesus told them what signs to look for in the days leading up to the destruction of the city and also in the times shortly before his own return from heaven.

Parts of chapter 24 seem to refer especially to the time when the Romans would attack Jerusalem and destroy it. Other parts are about the time just before Christ Jesus will return to the earth.

The Roman attack came about 40 years after Jesus spoke these words. Luke 21:20-21 tell us more about what Jesus said. It says there would be a time when Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies. During a short break in the Roman attack, Christians in Jerusalem who had remembered Jesus' words fled the city and saved their lives. The Romans returned and completely destroyed the city and the Temple in AD 70.

To this day, all that remains is the huge platform on which the Temple was built. The famous Western or 'Wailing' wall in modern Jerusalem is part of one wall of this platform.

The signs of the return of Jesus from heaven described later in the chapter are, of course, still to be completely fulfilled. Even Jesus did not know how much time would pass between the fall of Jerusalem and his second coming. In verse 36 he tells us that only God knew when he would return.



The Wailing Wall in Jerusalem

### The Return of the Lord Jesus (24:29-31)

"They (the Jews) will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world.

For the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." (Luke 21:24-28)

These words of Jesus in Luke chapter 21 give us more information about what Jesus said in Matthew 24:29-31. As you will see from the quotation there will be a time just before the return of the Lord Jesus when Jerusalem will no longer be in the hands of Gentiles. Until the middle of the last century there were very few Jews in Israel – they were scattered throughout the world, and Jerusalem was not under Jewish control. So we see that "*the times of the Gentiles*" are nearly ended because the Jews have returned to their homeland and Jerusalem is now mostly in the hands of the people of Israel. The prophecy Jesus made



almost 2,000 years ago is being fulfilled right now! It is a sure sign that the return of the Lord Jesus Christ cannot be far away!

We need to make sure that we are preparing ourselves to meet the Lord Jesus for he will return with great power and those who have believed his words and tried to serve him faithfully will be rewarded.

We also note that Luke's record includes "*distress of nations in perplexity*" and "*people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world*". We live in a time when world leaders struggle with huge problems and people can see no solutions of them. Issues like pollution, diminishing resources, global warming, disease, terrorism, wars and famine, as well as changing weather patterns, all threaten life as we know it. How much we need the return of the Lord Jesus!

Zechariah 12 is a prophecy about the time just before the Lord Jesus returns and verses 2, 3 show us that all nations will gather against Jerusalem. God says:

"Behold, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the surrounding peoples. The siege of Jerusalem will also be against Judah. On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves. And all the nations of the earth will gather against it."

Israel and Jerusalem are constantly in the news. In spite of the efforts of many world leaders, it seems impossible to bring peace to that land and its people. Zechariah tells us that this problem will persist. All of the surrounding nations that hate Israel will seek to destroy it. This will draw the whole world into a great conflict that will bring about the return of Jesus.

### **Warnings (24:36-51)**

If Jesus did not know the date of his own return, then we cannot expect to work it out. But we can look out for the signs Jesus mentioned. We can take careful note of what Jesus says in verses 36-51 about his coming again:

- It will be sudden.
- Most people will be going about their everyday business.
- Jesus will come at a time when even his followers will not expect him.
- His servants must therefore be constantly on the watch.
- True Christians, like wise servants, must be careful to do what their Master wants while he is away.

Name	
Address	
Reference Number	
Tutor	

Answers to most questions can be found in the lessons or Bible passages given. Please write your answers on this question paper and return them in the envelope provided:

- 1 The parable of the wedding feast represents the time when Jesus will return to this earth and be joined to his 'bride', the true church (Revelation 19:7-9).

Complete the table below:

Symbol in the parable	What it represents
The King	
The King's son	
The people first invited	
The people who eventually attend the feast	
The person without wedding clothes	

- 2 How does Jesus sum up the teaching of the 10 Commandments?

### **Questions on Chapter 23**

- 1 What does verse 3 mean?
- 2 How many times in this chapter does Jesus call the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites?

- 3 In what ways can we be hypocrites today?
  
- 4 Look at verse 11. What did Jesus do in John 13 to show this?
  
- 5 In your own words explain verse 12.

**Questions on Chapter 24**

- 1 What did Jesus say would happen to the Temple?
  
- 2 What warning is in verses 23-26?
  
- 3 What does verse 27 teach us about the coming of Jesus?
  
- 4 The time just before the return of Jesus is compared to the days of Noah. Why did God destroy the earth then?
  
- 5 How is our time similar to the time of Noah?
  
- 6 In what ways can we prepare ourselves for the return of the Lord Jesus to this earth?