

Matthew 22

The events in this chapter take place, scholars believe, on Tuesday of the so-called "Passion Week" (see chart at the beginning of chapter 21). At the end of the last chapter, Jesus was having controversy with the Pharisees. This chapter continues until He silences the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the newly-introduced Herodians. First, Jesus tells a parable which alludes to the coming destruction of Jerusalem (22:1-14). Secondly, the Pharisees and Herodians challenge Him on the subject of taxes (22:15-22). Thirdly, the Sadducees challenge Him on the question of life after death (22:23-33). Jesus' answer silences the Sadducees and Herodians. Fourthly, an individual Pharisee challenges Him on the greatest commandment (22:34-40). Finally, Jesus challenges the Pharisees on the question of the identity of David's Son (22:41-46). This silences the Pharisees.

TRANSLATION - 22:1-14:

1 And after answering, Jesus, again said in parables to them saying, **2** "It is similar, the kingdom of heaven, to a man, a king, who made a wedding celebration for his son. **3** And he sent his servants to call those having been invited to the wedding celebration, and they did not desire to come. **4** Again he sent other servants saying, 'Behold, my dinner has been prepared, my bulls and the fatted calf have been slaughtered and all things [are] ready. Come to the wedding celebration.'

5 But those, being unconcerned, went away, one to his own field, one to his business. **6** And the rest, after seizing his servants, mistreated and killed [them]. **7** And the king was angry and, after sending his troops, he destroyed those murderers and their city he burned. **8** At that time, he said to his servants, 'The wedding celebration is ready. Those having been invited were not worthy. **9** Therefore, go unto the outlets of the streets and as many as you might find, call to the wedding celebration.'

10 And after going out, those servants into the streets they gathered all whom they found, both evil and good; and the wedding celebration was filled of those reclining at the tables. **11** And after entering, the king to see those reclining at the table, he saw there a man who had not clothed with the clothing of the wedding celebration, **12** And he said to him, 'Companion, how did you enter here, not having clothing of the wedding celebration?' And he was silent. **13** At that time, the king said to his servants, 'After binding his feet and hands, cast him into the darkness outside. There, there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. **14** For many are called, and few chosen.'

GREEK WORDS:

"King" (ver. 2) was used first at 1:6. It is found 115 times in the NT. "Wedding celebration" is one word in the Greek; the word is found 16 times in the NT, eight times in this context: 22:2-4, 8-12. "To be invited" (ver. 3) is used 148 times; 26 times in Matthew. "Dinner" (ver. 4) is used three times: Matthew 22:4; Luke 11:38; 14:12. "To be prepared" is used 40 times, 7 times in Matthew. "Bulls" is used four times: Matthew 22:4; Acts 14:13; Heb. 9:13; 10:4. "Fatted calf" is used only here. "To be slaughtered" is used 14 times; only here in Matthew.

"To neglect" or "to be unconcerned" (ver. 5) is used only here in Matthew. It is also used at 1 Tim. 4:14; Heb. 2:3; 8:9. "Business" is only used here. It refers to general matters or "concerns." "To seize" (ver. 6) is used 47 times, first at 9:25. "To mistreat" or "to be abuse" is found 5 times: Matthew 22:6; Luke 11:45; 18:32; Acts 14:5; 1 Thess. 2:2. "To kill" was used first at 10:28. "To be angry" (ver. 7) is used 8 times: Matthew 5:22; 18:34; 22:7; Luke 14:21; 15:28; Eph. 4:26; Rev. 11:18; 12:17. "Troops" is used 8 times: Matthew 22:7; Luke 23:11; Acts 23:10, 27; Rev. 9:16; 19:14, 19. "To destroy" was used first at 2:13. "Murderer" is used 7 times: Matthew 22:7; Acts 3:14; 7:52; 28:4; 1 Peter 4:15; Rev. 21:8; 22:15. "To burn" is found only here. "Outlet" (ver. 9) is a space along the road where some might stop and rest. It is only used here in the NT. "Street" means "way, path, road." It was first used at 2:12.

“To gather together” (ver. 10) is the verb associated with the noun “synagogue.” It was used first at 2:4. It is used 59 times in the NT. “Evil” was used first at 5:11, 37, 39, 45. “To be filled” is used 24 times in the NT; in Matthew at 22:10; 27:48. “To recline at the table” is one word in Greek; it was first used at 9:10. It is used here (22:10-11); 26:7, 20. The NT uses the verb a total of 14 times. “To see” (ver. 11) was used first at 6:1; 11:7. “To be clothed” was used first at 6:25. It will be used here (22:11) and 27:31. Its related noun “clothes” was used first at 3:4; 6:25, 28; 7:15. “Companion” (ver. 12) means also “comrade or friend” and was used at 20:13. Matthew will use it here (22:12) and at 26:50. “To be silent” is used here (22:12, 34) only in Matthew; it will be used again at Mark 1:25; 4:39; Luke 4:35; 1 Tim. 5:18; 1 Peter 2:15.

“To bind” (ver. 13) was used first at 12:29. “Darkness” was used first at 4:16. “Weeping” was used first at 2:18. “Gnashing” was used first at 8:12. “Called” is used here in Matthew (22:14). It is used 9 more times in the NT: Rom. 1:1, 6-7; 8:28; 1 Cor. 1:1-2, 24; Jude 1; Rev. 17:14. “Chosen” is transliterated as the English word *elect*. It is used here, for the first time, in Matthew; it is also at 24:22, 24, 31. The word is used a total of 22 times in the NT.

GREEK GRAMMAR:

The verbs “to have been invited” (ver. 3, 4, 8), “to have been prepared” (ver. 4) and “to have been slaughtered” (ver. 4) and “to be clothed” (ver. 11) translate a perfect tense verb, which indicates the individual had been invited in the past and was still invited.

The verb “were not willing” (ver. 3) is in the imperfect tense, indicating the stubborn and persistent refusal of the guests to respond to the invitation; see Jesus’ further elaboration at 23:37.

PARALLELS:

There is a very similar parable in Luke 14:15-24. The statement “weeping and gnashing of teeth” is used also at 8:12; 13:42, 50. A wedding banquet, as a picture of the celebration of the Messiah and His relationship with His people was seen in 9:15 (See comments there). It is also pictured in Revelation 19:7-9.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

The Messianic banquet from the OT (Isa. 25:6; 62:1-5) is the background of the parable. See also comments at 9:15.

COMMENTS:

Jesus is teaching in the temple (21:23) where His authority is challenged by the chief priests and elders. He told them a parable in 21:28-32 and a second parable at 21:33-46. This is the third parable directed primarily, although not exclusively, to the religious leaders.

A king (18:23-24 also involved a “king”) provides a wedding celebration and banquet for his son who will be married. Initial invitations had been sent out for guests to note the event and approximate date so they could be prepared, including having proper clothing for such an auspicious event. When the banquet was ready, the king sent his slaves to personally escort the guests to the wedding. Those guests were not willing to come. It would have been insubordinate for guests of a king not to come at his invitation. It might even have appeared to be seditious. The king sent a second round of slaves with an even more detailed announcement: the dinner is now ready. The bulls are sacrificed. The calf has been fattened and slaughtered. Everything is ready. The king is almost begging his guests to honor his son by coming to the banquet. As with the prior parable (21:34), the slaves represent the prophets sent by God. The son is certainly Jesus Himself (compare 9:15; 25:1; John 3:29).

However, the guests spurned the invitation. Some went to work on their farms; others left for other matters. The rest seized the slaves and mistreated them and even killed some. Just as the king had reacted in the previous parable (21:41), the king in this parable sends his soldiers and destroys those who killed his servants and burns their city. But, the wedding celebration is still going to happen. It seems obvious that Jesus’ parable in this point pictures

the coming destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70 for the Jews' rejection and murder of Jesus, the Son of God. It is true that in A. D. 70, only the temple was burned, not the city itself. But the destruction of the city in the parable clearly portrays the destruction of the city of Jerusalem.

Subsequently, the king sent his slaves into the streets, to the places where common people gather, and they invited all of them to the wedding banquet. Note that he says the others "were not worthy" (ver. 8). The slaves did so and found individuals who were "evil and good." All were invited. All of these individuals were honored at being invited and they came and the wedding celebration was full.

But the parable is not over. Even if the "bad" and "good" were invited, they were expected to respond appropriately dressed. When the king came in to the wedding banquet to visit with his guests, he noted one individual who was not dressed properly for a wedding. When the king asked the guest about this matter, the guest remained silent, convicted by his own conscience. Silencing His critics is a theme in this chapter: 22:12, 34, 46. Consequently, the king commanded his servants to bind the guest, both hand and foot, and cast him outside of the wedding celebration, into outer darkness. Just as Jesus had described the torment of hell in 8:12 and 13:42, 50 (also 24:51; 25:30) here "outer darkness" is described as a place of "weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Jesus concludes this parable by commenting that many are called to the wedding banquet of the King's Son but few will be chosen, depending on their response. "The many" is a Jewish idiom referring to "all," as the parable illustrates practically "all" were invited to the wedding celebration. Yet, as the man without the wedding garment illustrates, only a "few" are chosen - those who respond to Christ in faith and obedience.

APPLICATION:

As with the previous parables, Jesus is giving a message to His audience, in particular, the religious leaders. The Jews were God's chosen people in the OT times, chosen to be the conduit or incubator of the Messianic seed. God continually sent prophets, including John the baptizer, to call Israel to repentance. Israel continually refused to respond. When God the Father sent the Son to reap the fruit of faith and obedience from the Jewish nation, they chose to ignore the Father's message and kill His Son. Subsequently, they would experience the wrath of God and His armies, in the person of the Roman army under General Titus in A. D. 66-70. The Jews were invited to be God's spiritual children through Jesus but they spurned the invitation. Paul will state in Acts 13:46 that the Jews "judged themselves" unworthy of eternal life, so he would preach to the Gentiles.

God used Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia to punish His people in the OT times: 2 Chron. 36:22; Isa. 10:5-11; 44:28; 45:1; Dan. 1:2; 2:37; Hab. 1:6. It was not outside of His nature to use Rome to punish Israel yet again.

God consequently turned His invitation to the Gentiles who responded to that invitation (see Revelation 5:9; 7:9; 14:6). Yet, even some of those did not obey as they should have and they, along with unbelieving Jews, will be cast into outer darkness, into the fires of hell, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (see Rom. 11:22). James will teach that faith must obey in order to bring justification (James 2:14-26).

The gospel call goes out to everyone (2 Thess. 2:14; Titus 2:11-14). Those who believe and obey the Gospel (2 Thess. 1:7-9), being clothed with Christ (Gal. 2:27-28) will be at the Messiah's banquet.

TRANSLATION - 22:15-22:

15 At that time, after going out, the Pharisees took council, how Him they might ensnare in a word. **16** And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that you are truthful and the way of God in truth you are teaching and you it does not concern concerning no one. For you do not look at the face of man. **17** Therefore, tell us, what do you think? Is it authorized to give a cason to Caesar or not?'

18 And Jesus, after knowing their evil, said, “Why do you test Me, hypocrites? **19** Show Me the coin of the cason.” And they brought to Him a denarius. **20** And He said to them, “Whose is this image and the inscription?” **21** They said to Him, “Caesar.” Then He said to them, “Pay back therefore the things of Caesar to Caesar and that of God, to God.” **22** And after hearing, they marveled, and leaving Him, they departed.

GREEK WORDS:

“Council” (ver. 15) is used 8 times in the NT; first at 12:14. “To ensnare” or “to entrap” is only used here in the NT. “Word” (*logos*) is found 330 times, first at 5:32, 37. “Disciple” (ver. 16) is used 261 times, first at 5:1. Here it clearly does not refer to the disciples of Jesus Himself. “Herodians” are found here (22:16); Mark 3:6; 12:13. “Teacher” is used 59 times, first at 8:19. “Truthful” as an adjective is found 26 times; here is the only time it is used in Matthew. “Truth” as a noun is found 109 times, here for the only time in Matthew. “To teach” is found 97 times, first at 4:23. “To be concerned” is found only here in Matthew. It is used 9 times more in the NT. “To be authorized” (ver. 17) is found 31 times in the NT; in Matthew, 9 times. “Cason” is found at 17:25; 22:17, 19; Mark 12:14. “Caesar” is used 29 times in the NT, in the four gospels and Acts and once after Acts: Philippians 4:22.

“Evil” (ver. 18) may also be translated “maliciousness” or “wickedness.” It is used only here in Matthew, but also at Mark 7:22; Luke 11:39; Acts 3:26; Rom. 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:8; Eph. 6:12. “Hypocrites” is used 17 times in the NT, first at 6:2, 5, 16. “Show” (ver. 19) was used first at 16:1. “Coin” is used only here at 22:19. “Cason” was used first at 17:25. After this text (22:17, 19) it is only used again at Mark 12:14. “Denarius” was used first at 18:28. “Image” (ver. 20) translates the Greek word transliterated as *icon*. It is used only here in Matthew. It is used a total of 23 times in the NT. “Inscription” is used here (22:20); Mark 12:16; 15:26; Luke 20:24; 23:38. “To pay back” (ver. 21) was first used at 5:26, 33. “To marvel” was used first at 8:10, 27.

PARALLELS:

This passage has its parallels in Mark 12:13-17 and Luke 20:20-26.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

“Herodians” (ver. 16) were politically oriented Jews, who probably supported the reign and policies of King Herod perhaps more openly and boisterously than the typical Jew. They are not mentioned anywhere else in early writings.

For the monetary value of “cason” (a tax on each person) see the “Archaeology” section at 17:25. For the “denarius,” see 18:28. Rome required a census (see Luke 2:1-4) so they could collect their taxes. Every time a Jew paid his or her taxes, they were reminded that their country was not free. Some Jews, notably the Pharisees, hated the tax because they believed God was their king. Refusing to pay the tax contributed to the final destruction of the Jewish state in the “Bar Kochba” rebellion of A. D. 135. Early in Jesus’ life (A. D. 6), a man named Judas led an insurrection against this tax (see the reference at Acts 5:37).

“Caesar” (ver. 17) denoted the head of the Roman Empire. The first was Julius Augustus Caesar whose name became a title for later rulers. This specific Caesar (ruling from A. D. 14-37) would be Tiberius Caesar. He had coins minted with an inscription: “Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus.” On the other side was the goddess of peace, Pax, with an inscription: “High Priest” (*pontifex maximus*). Other caesars mentioned are found in the NT are: Augustus (31 B. C. - 14 A. D.; Luke 2:1), Claudius (41-54 A. D.; Acts 17:7; 18:2), and Nero (54-68 A. D. Acts 25:8-12, 21; 28:18; Phil. 4:22). Those not mentioned are: Gaius (Caligula; 37-41 A. D.), Galba (68 A. D.), Otho (69 A. D.), Vitellius (69 A. D.), and Vespasian (69-79 A. D.).

COMMENTS:

The Jewish religious leaders are exasperated that Jesus continues to win the argument and His popularity is not decreasing. The Pharisees have verbally attacked Jesus before (see, for example: 12:14; 16:1; 19:3). Here, the Pharisees take council with some politically astute

Jews identified as the “Herodians.” Together, they send some of their own disciples to Jesus in order to “test” Him. This is the only reference in the NT to “disciples” of the Pharisees. They want Jesus to either offend the common people and lose their popularity or offend the political leaders and be jailed or, better yet, killed. They apparently do not realize they are literally fulfilling the previous two parables Jesus spoke to them!

In this instant, they first commend Jesus (likely facetiously) for His truthfulness and (secondly) the fact that He is so dedicated to the “truth of God” that (thirdly) He will not change His position relative to His audience. That is the significance of the idiom (fourthly) that Jesus does not “look at the face of men.” That is, He is not partial. So, they ask Him a politically damaging question: What about paying taxes? The Jews did not want to pay taxes, at least not with the Roman coin, because it had the inscription and image of the Caesar whom the Romans worshipped as a god. What does Jesus think?

Jesus, as always, knows how to take the stronger argument. In this case, He called for someone to bring to Him the coin in question. They brought Him the coin, a denarius, which they were paid each day. Then He asked them whose image and whose inscription was on the coin. They answered, “Caesar’s.” Jesus then drew the logical conclusion: “If Caesar provides you coins with which to be paid, give him what he requires. But also give to God what He requires.” A more sensible response could not be provided. It also argues against the idea, with which Jesus was put to death, that Jesus was a threat to the civil government.

Jesus’ questioners marveled at His answer and the disciples of the Pharisees were silenced and they left Him.

APPLICATION:

Paul (Rom. 13:7; 1 Tim. 2:2) and Peter (1 Peter 2:17) will reiterate Jesus’ point here that God’s followers are obligated to support their local government, including with taxes (unless their government requires something which violates the commands of God: Acts 4:19; 5:29). Some religious groups, notably the Jehovah’s Witnesses, do not believe one can “pledge allegiance” to their civil government and be devoted to God concurrently. However, giving “what is Cesar’s to Caesar” does not stop one from devoting to God what is God’s, as long as one recognizes that the highest allegiance (see 22:34-40) is owed to Jehovah God. After the destruction of Jerusalem, the Sadducees eventually dissolve.

TRANSLATION - 22:23-33:

23 In that day, there came to Him Sadducees, saying there is not a resurrection, and they asked Him **24** saying, “Teacher, Moses said, ‘If any may die not having a child, his brother may marry his wife and raise up seed for his brother. **25** And there were with us seven brothers. And the first, after marring, died, and not having seed, he left his wife to his brother. **26** Likewise also the second and the third until the seven. **27** And last of all, the wife died. **28** In the resurrection, therefore, whose of the seven will be the wife? For all had her.”

29 After answering, Jesus said to them, “You are deceived, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. **30** For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are married, but as angels in the heavens they are. **31** But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read the word to you by God saying, **32** ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead but of those living.’ **33** And after hearing, the crowds were astounded at His teaching.

GREEK WORDS:

“Sadducees” (ver. 23) was first found at 3:7. They were also mentioned at 16:1, 6, 11-12. See 3:7 for comments on their beliefs and history. “Resurrection” is mentioned here for the first time in Matthew (22:23, 28, 30-31). It is used a total of 42 times in the NT. “To ask” or “to inquire” is used 56 times in the NT; it was used first at 12:10. On “teacher” (ver. 24), see at 8:19. For “Moses,” see at 8:4. He is mentioned by name 7 times in Matthew. “To die” was seen first at 8:32. “To marry” is found only here in the NT (22:24). “To raise up” is the verb related to

“resurrection;” it was first used at 9:9. “Seed” was first used at 13:24, 27, 32, 37-38. The verb “to die” in verse 25 is different than the verb used in verse 24. This verb was used first at 2:19. It literally means “to complete” or “to terminate.”

“To be deceived” (ver. 29) was used first at 18:12-13. “Scriptures” was used first at 21:42. “Power” is used first at 7:22; 11:20-21, 23. “To marry” (ver. 30) was used first at 5:32; 19:9-10. It is a different verb than that used earlier at verse 24. “To be married” is a slightly different word; it is used 7 times: Matthew 22:30; 24:38; Mark 12:25; Luke 17:27; 20:35; 1 Cor. 7:38. “Angels” or “messenger” is used first at 1:20, 24. “Dead” (ver. 31) is used 128 times in the NT, first at 8:22. “To read” has been used multiple times in Matthew already, first at 12:3, 5. The word “word” here is related to the verb “to speak.” “Abraham” is mentioned in Matthew 7 times; “Isaac,” 4 times; “Jacob,” 6 times. “To live” is used 140 times, first at 4:4. “To be astounded” (ver. 33) is used 13 times in the NT, first at 7:28; 13:54. “Teaching” is the noun related to the verb “to teach;” it was used first at 7:28.

PARALLELS:

This interchange is found also at Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-40.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

The law to which the Sadducees refer is recorded in Deuteronomy 25:5 with a pre-Law example found in the behavior of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38. The law from Deuteronomy 25:5 is often referred to as the “levirate” law, for the Latin word for “brother-in-law.” The story of Ruth also deals with the “Levirate” law.

There is debate whether the OT teaches the concept of an “afterlife.” See this author’s commentary on Genesis, specifically the final chapter on “Theology of Genesis,” wherein he argues that the patriarchs *did* have a concept of an afterlife. Other passages which indicate some idea of an afterlife are found in: Hosea 6:1-3; 13:14; Ezek. 37:1-14; Job 19:25-27; Isa. 25:8; 26:19; Dan. 12:1-3, 13.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

A literary work written between the OT and the NT, Tobit, records an incident similar to the scenario presented here by the Sadducees (Tobit 3:7-8). This work was not accepted as inspired by the Holy Spirit.

COMMENTS:

The Sadducees were philosophically materialists in the sense that they did not believe in a life after death (see Acts 23:8), including the rejection of angels. Subsequently, they did not believe in a “spirit world.” They did not believe in a resurrection. They also did not accept any books from the OT except the first five books, the books of Moses, the “Pentateuch.”

This scenario they present to Jesus, they believe, is ludicrous enough to prove that there is no life after death; there is no resurrection. They little realized that Jesus knew more about the Scriptures than they did! First, Jesus affirms they are deceived (they “deceive themselves”) because they do not know: 1) the Scriptures; 2) the power of God. First, relative to the power of God, Jesus affirms that there is no marriage relationship in heaven so their question is irrational at its presupposition. Rather, humans are “like” angels, in that they have no need for procreation, the sexual relationship, or marriage itself. This text does *not* teach that humans *become* angels when they die. Humans and angels are two distinct groups of created beings, the latter were created to serve the former (see Heb. 1:14).

Second, relative to the ignorance of the Scriptures, Jesus challenges the Sadducees if they had not read God’s word (as He has done multiple times: 12:3, 5; 19:4; 21:16, 42) wherein God stated that He “is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Jesus concludes: God is not the God of the dead but of those who are living. At the moment Jesus made that statement, in Exodus 3:6 to Moses, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been dead for centuries. Yet, God is *still* their God because they were *still alive*! Yes, there is life after death.

When the crowds heard this statement, they were astounded at His teaching.

APPLICATION:

We wish to note three important points here. First, if we are to follow Jesus' example, we will have a high regard for the OT (as well as the NT) as being the words of God. It might have been Moses or Ezra or Isaiah who wrote the words, but it was God, through His Spirit, who guided their writings (see 2 Peter 1:20-21).

Secondly, even today, we often have questions about the after-life which perplex us. We should, first of all know the Scriptures. Secondly, we should never question the power of God. For example, if a loved one does not become a Christian or dies unfaithfully to Christ, will that not diminish our own joy in being in heaven? Well, the Scriptures say there will be no tears in heaven: Revelation 7:17; 21:4. Additionally, God has the power to either: cause us to forget the emotional pain of our loved one being in hell (cf. John 16:21) or He has the power to overwhelm us with the glories of heaven to such a degree that our loss is simply not felt emotionally. Let us know the Scriptures and let us trust the power of God! A smilier answer would be given to one who questions if a mutilated body (even one cremated) can be whole in heaven: don't forget the power of God!

Third, which we have already indicated, is the idea that humans do not become angels. In heaven we will be *like* angels in the sense that we will not be married. We will not need a "husband" or "wife" once we arrive in heaven. Angels and humans are two different classes of created being and one does not become the other.

For other passages which connect "power" with the resurrection, see 1 Cor. 15:43; Eph. 1:19.

TRANSLATION - 22:34-40:

34 And the Pharisees, after hearing that He silenced the Sadducees, gathered against Him, **35** and asked one from them [a scribe] testing Him, **36** "Teacher, which commandment [is] greatest in the law?"

37 And He said to Him, "Love the Lord your God in all your heart and in all your soul and in all your mind. **38** This is the greatest and first commandment. **39** And the second like it, "Love your neighbor as yourself." **40** In these two commandments all the law hangs and the prophets."

GREEK WORDS:

"To silence" (ver. 34) was used first at 22:12. It suggests the picture of a muzzle one puts on a dog. "Scribe" (ver. 35, in some manuscripts) is used only here in Matthew; it is used a total of 9 times in the NT. "To test" was used at 22:18. "Teacher" was used at 22:16. "Commandment" was used first at 5:19. It is used a total of 67 times. "Law" was used first at 5:17-18, out of a total of 194 times.

"To love" (ver. 37) is used 143 times in the NT; first at 5:43-44, 46. "Heart" is used 156 times in the NT, first at 5:8, 28. "Soul" is used 103 times in the NT, first at 2:20; 6:25. "Mind" is used 12 times in the NT, first and only time in Matthew is here (22:37). "Neighbor" (ver. 39) is used first at 5:43; 19:19. "To hang" (ver. 40) is used first at 18:6. It is used a total of 7 times in the NT: Luke 23:39; Acts 5:30; 10:39; 28:4; Gal. 3:13.

PARALLELS:

This paragraph has its parallel at Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

The "greatest" commandment comes from Deuteronomy 6:5. The second greatest comes from Leviticus 19:18. "Mind" in Matthew takes the place of "strength" from Deuteronomy 6:5; however, "mind" is found in a passage related to Deuteronomy 6:5: Joshua 22:5.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

Deuteronomy 6:5 is called the “Shema” among Jews, which is a transliteration of the Hebrew verb: “Hear” or “Obey” in Deuteronomy 6:4. This text was recited by Jews each morning and each evening.

COMMENTS:

When Jesus silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees decided they would take another shot at Jesus. One of their number tested Jesus with another question which the Jewish rabbis had debated often. The rabbis famously numbered 613 commandments within the Law of Moses. Naturally, many people would want to know which commandment(s) was the most important (see “summaries” of the Law in: Micah 6:8; Psalm 15; Isa. 33:15-16; 56:1; Amos 5:4; Habakkuk 2:4). In fact, Jesus even acknowledged there were “heavier” matters in the Law: 23:23. This question is a last effort to get Jesus to offend either the common people or the political leaders. Yet it is obvious, by its nature, that this question would not offend anyone by His answer.

Jesus responds, quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 that man should love God supremely. He should love God with all of His affections (his “heart”) and with all of His energy (his “soul”) and with all of his intellect (his “mind”). In truth, Jesus is not making a distinction between “heart, soul, and mind.” He is simply saying man must love God with all (note the triple use of the word) of his being. God deserves man’s highest allegiance and deepest affections. Man should love God supremely. That is the “greatest and first (in priority) of all the commandments of the law.”

But Jesus also gave a second answer, the second most important commandment (citing Leviticus 19:18): Man should love his neighbor sacrificially. This is one of the most quoted OT texts in the NT: Love your neighbor as yourself. Man should treat others the way he would want them to treat him (see Matthew 7:12). Man should love his neighbor sacrificially.

Jesus brings this discussion to an end by stating that all the law and the prophets “hang,” have their point of origin, from these two commandments. Who could argue with this?

APPLICATION:

Clearly love for God must take priority in one’s life. This principle is illustrated from the beginning of the Bible until the end. Jesus emphasized also the importance of loving one’s neighbor as self; He cites Leviticus 19:18 in Matthew 5:43; 19:19 and here. Paul will cite the same text twice (Rom. 13:9-10; Gal. 5:14) and James will also (James 2:8). See also 1 John 4:21.

TRANSLATION - 22:41-46:

41 And after having gathered together the Pharisees, Jesus asked them, **42** saying, “What do you think concerning the Christ? Whose Son is He? They said to Him, “Of David.”

43 He said to them, “How, therefore, does David by the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,” saying, ‘**44** The Lord said to my lord, ‘Sit on My right, until when I set Your enemies under Your feet?’”

45 If, therefore, David calls Him ‘Lord,” how His Son is He?’ **46** And no one was able to answer Him a word nor dared any from that day to ask Him nothing.

GREEK WORDS:

“To gather together” (ver. 41) was used at 22:10, 34. “To ask” was used first at 12:10. “Christ” (ver. 42) is the Greek translation of “Messiah,” or “Anointed one.” See 1:1 for its definition and OT importance. The name is used 529 times in the NT. “David” is used 17 times by Matthew. “Spirit” (ver. 43) was used first at 1:18, 20. “Enemy” (ver. 44) was used first at 5:43-44. “To dare” is used here only in Matthew. It is used a total of 16 times in the NT.

PARALLELS:

This exchange has its parallels at Mark 12:35-37 and Luke 20:41-44.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

Psalm 110:1 is the passage cited by Jesus in verse 44. It is the most cited or alluded passage in the NT; all the passages which picture Jesus sitting on the right hand of God are referring to this text from Psalm 110 (see, for example: 26:64; Acts 2:34-35; 5:31; 7:55-56; Rom. 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20; 2:6; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12-13; 1 Peter 3:22; Rev. 3:21).

One of the most widely held views of the “Messiah” among the first century Jews - which was a correct view - was that He would be the “Son of David.” John 7:42; 2 Sam. 7:12-13; Psa. 89:4; Jer. 23:5. Matthew consistently portrays Jesus as the “Son of David.” 1:1, 20; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9. Peter’s confession in Matthew 16:16 combines two ideas: Messiah / Christ, and Son of the Living God. That confession interprets David’s statement in Psalm 110:1.

COMMENTS:

The Pharisees had assembled themselves together, no doubt discussing how to seize or arrest Jesus, when Jesus decided to put a question to them. This question had also been debated often by the rabbis, as they tried to reason about the relationship between Jesus and the Messiah. Who is the Messiah, relative to David? They answered, correctly, “the Son of David.” But, He was more than that.

Jesus asks them, “Then how did David call him ‘Lord’?” In the original Hebrew of Psalm 110, the first “Lord” is *yhwh*, transliterated as “Yahweh.” The second “lord” is the common word for “lord” or “master” (*adonai*). A man does not call his own son “lord.” Psalm 110 was a psalm written by David according to its superscription. Incidentally, Jesus attributes the writing to David but its source of origin is the Holy Spirit. Jesus clearly had an exalted opinion of the OT Scriptures! David speaks of God (Yahweh) who says to David’s ‘Lord:’ “Sit on My right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” Who could sit beside God on His throne other than deity? How could David’s “son” sit on God’s right hand unless David’s “son” is deity? No wonder David called Him “Lord!” Jesus is greater than the temple (12:6), greater than Jonah (12:41) and greater than Solomon (12:42). Indeed, He is greater than David!

The Pharisees could not draw that conclusion (but another Pharisee will: Saul of Tarsus - Romans 1:1-4; 9:5) and, just like with the Sadducees earlier (ver. 34) and the man in the parable (ver. 12), Jesus silenced His critics. No one was able to answer Him relative to this question and they all, from that day, quit asking Him questions. Their plight was hopeless. There was no entrapping Jesus!

APPLICATION:

Just as Jesus did earlier (22:31), here, He presumes the Holy Spirit guided the OT writers, in this case, David. The OT is not just words written by men! They are words penned by men but guided by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21; see 2 Sam. 23:2). For similar ideas, see: Acts 4:25; Heb. 3:7; 9:8; 10:15.

This exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees serves to emphasize, once again, the exalted authority of Jesus of Nazareth as Matthew has been presenting it: Matt. 10:32-33; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16. Practically ever reference to Jesus reigning at the right hand of the Father is an allusion to Psalm 110 (see above under “Old Testament References”).