

## THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

*Lesson 15- Study Questions*

*Matthew 22:1-46*

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**Review:** *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

### DAY ONE

Read Matthew 22:1-14

**NOTE:** As today's lesson begins, Matthew presents the third of the parables that are interspersed within the debate between the Jewish leadership and Jesus after they challenged his authority. We begin with the Parable of the Wedding Feast. "Banquets, or feasts, played important social and religious roles at the time of Jesus...Banquets were often used to celebrate religious feasts such as Passover (i.e. the Last Supper) The prophets spoke of God providing a banquet for his people (Isaiah 25:6) and in Matthew we read several times that Jesus used a feast as an image for the reign of God. *Martin*

1. This is a parable with many allegories. Jesus begins by comparing the kingdom of heaven (God) to a wedding feast. Briefly summarize what happened when the king sent his servants to invite previously determined guests to come to the feast. (verses 1-9)

2. Identify (from those same verses) who the following could represent:

The king

The son

The servants

The invited guests

Their city

3. In verses 10-14 we read that the banquet hall was soon filled with both good and bad people wanting to have a share in the king's wedding feast for his son. All but one of the guests prepared properly by donning wedding clothes (some scholars suggest the clothes may represent righteousness, or faith and good works) except for one. What happened to him?

**NOTE:** The outcome of this man's situation informs us of the true meaning of the symbolism... the proper attire would correspond to all that Jesus said was required for entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven – true repentance for sin and faith in Christ, and then a commitment to love and obey the Lord as evidence of saving faith...The invitation has gone out to all who care to listen, but some just refused, and some wanted to come but refused to submit to the requirements of entrance into the kingdom. *St. Ignatius Catholic Community*

4. Those whom Jesus refers to as “chosen” are the people who respond to his invitation and respond in the proper manner, so that they are prepared to enter the kingdom. Share some thoughts on why you think this is a parable that makes some people uncomfortable.

5. CONNECTION: “The goodness of God has no bounds and does not discriminate against anyone. The banquet of the Lord's gifts is universal, for everyone. The Gospel, rejected by some, is unexpectedly welcomed by other hearts. Everyone is given the opportunity to respond; there is, however, one condition: “wedding attire” must be worn...” *Pope Francis*  
What would consist of “proper attire” for entrance into the kingdom of heaven?

The hymn “All are Welcome” reflects God's open invitation to his banquet. Reflect on these words as your prayer today:

Let us build a house where love is found  
In water, wine and wheat  
A banquet hall on holy ground  
Where peace and justice meet  
... Here the love of God, through Jesus  
Is revealed in time and space  
As we share in Christ the feast that frees us  
... All are welcome, all are welcome  
All are welcome in this place.

## DAY TWO

Read Matthew 22:15-22

**NOTE:** “The Pharisees and Herodians join forces to plot against Jesus. The Herodians were supporters of the regime of Herod and his dynasty. They were quite well disposed to Roman rule and, as far as religious matters were concerned, they held the same kind of materialistic ideas as the Sadducees. The Pharisees were zealous keepers of the Law; they were anti-Roman and regarded the (two) Herods as usurpers...their amazing pact shows how much they hated Jesus.”

*Navarre Bible*

6. The Jewish leadership once again try to trap Jesus (verses 22:16-17), first by flattery and then with a tricky question. We sometimes confuse compliments with flattery, but the Church considers flattery a sin. Comment on the difference between complimenting and flattering (and why you think flattery would be considered a sin).

7. They ask Jesus a “no-win” question. If he says the Jews should not pay Caesar, he could be reported for treason; if he says yes, they can paint him as siding with the Romans against his own people. Briefly describe how Jesus answered them in verses 19-21.

**NOTE:** In Jesus day, the most widely circulated denarius bore the image of the emperor Tiberius and the Latin inscription *Tiberius Caesar Divi Augusti Filius Augustus Pontifex Maximum (the august son of the divine Augustus high priest)*. *Sacra Pagina*

8. Refer to the Commentary, page 112, and record one of the three ways Jesus’ clever response could be understood.

9. There is a tone of hostility in Jesus’ response in this controversy, and “the opposition deepened its hostility and resolve. Good and evil are ready to do battle.” (*McBride*) Read and record the last two lines of Isaiah 11:4 which could be interpreted to describe Jesus outwitting his opponents.

10. **CONNECTION:** The expression “Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar” is familiar; but less studied is the final phrase, “repay to God what belongs to God.” Just as Caesar’s face was imprinted on the Roman coin, we humans are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:25-27), so in a way, we are his “coins”, or representatives, here on earth. Consider some important things that God has done for you and then suggest how best you can “repay” God.

Read Psalm 116:12-14 (NABRE or NRSV) and record one of these verses as your prayer and promise today.

### DAY THREE

Read Matthew 22:23-33

**NOTE:** The Sadducees of Jesus' time were a "sect of religious scholars who refused to advocate the growing conviction about the resurrection of the body...The riddle they proposed to Jesus about the wife and the seven husbands was probably a typical conundrum used in their teachings to show the presumed absurdity of bodily resurrection. (*McBride*)

11. The Sadducees approached Jesus declaring "There is no resurrection," and followed that statement describing an unusual situation: A woman's husband dies and she marries his brother he dies and she marries the next brother – on through seven brothers (according to law). Then she dies. What question did the Sadducees then pose? (verse 28)

12. Jesus continued his response to the Sadducees. Complete verses 29-30:

Jesus said to them in reply, "You are misled

At the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage

13. Being like angels would mean that one would be transformed. Later, Paul will say we will have a "spiritual body." Read 1 Corinthians 15:40-44 and record a phrase or phrases which speaks to you of this glorious transformation.

14. When God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, he did not speak in the past tense. Rather he said, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." (Exodus 3:5-6) What does this indicate to you?

15. CONNECTION: Jesus doesn't tell us what resurrected life will be like, and we know that it is beyond our imagining – but all is possible through the power of God. Those who heard him were astonished. Is there something about Jesus' teaching about the resurrection that gives you hope or astonishes you?

Reread Matthew 19:26 and write a prayer today asking the Lord to strengthen your faith and hope in the resurrection.

#### **DAY FOUR**

**Read Matthew 22:34-40**

16. Imagine the reaction of the Pharisees when they heard Jesus had silenced the Sadducees. As a result, they chose a top scholar to again test Jesus. The scholar asked, “which commandment in the law is the greatest?” Record what Jesus responded as the first and greatest commandment. (Good memory verse)

**NOTE:** Jesus quoted a command well known by every Jew. It became the opening words of a prayer recited morning and evening by devout Jews and is called the Shema, which means “Hear.” The prayer dates from the first millennium B.C.E. when it was recited as part of regular services in the ancient temple in Jerusalem. It consists of three separate passages taken from the Hebrew Bible: Deuteronomy (6:4–9) and (11:13-21); and Numbers (15:37-41). *STL Jewish Light, Rabbi Reuven Kimmelman*

17. Read Moses’ words to the people in Deuteronomy 6:1-7 and comment on why it was (is) so important to take these words to heart and to “keep repeating them to your children.”

18. Jesus went on to define the second command, which is from Leviticus 19:18, and which he says is like the first. What is the second greatest command and in what way is it like the first?

19. He concludes his answer to the Sadducees by saying “The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.” (verse 40) Refer to the Commentary, page 113, and note why these two commandments are so inextricably linked.

20. CONNECTION: Jesus has summarized the whole of the law (the 10 commandments) in two statements. By so doing, his answer has assured that all of the commandments must be followed and are the guiding principles by which all should live. As the Beatles said, “All You Need is Love.” Share a “love story” from your heart in which, with God’s grace, love conquered what seemed difficult or even impossible.

Read Ephesians 5:1-2 and let love toward God and others guide you in your everyday tasks.

#### **DAY FIVE**

**Read Matthew 22:41-46**

**NOTE:** The anticipation of a coming ruler, “Messiah” is (and was) central to conventional Jewish thought. The term *mashiach* (messiah) means “anointed one.” There was no one single understanding of the Messiah shared by everyone at the time of Jesus.

21. Read the prophetic verses shown below and match the following descriptions with the appropriate selection: (a) the anticipated messiah as a great political leader, descended from King David, or (b) one well-versed in Jewish law and observant of its commandments, or (c) great judge, who makes righteous decisions.

Jeremiah 23:5

Isaiah 11:2-5

Jeremiah 33:15

22. Today’s final controversy between the Jewish leadership and Jesus begins with Jesus turning the tables. What questions does he ask them? (verse 42)

23. They answer him by simply saying “David’s,” to which Jesus then questioned them on how David’s son could be called “lord” if he was not the Messiah. Read and record verse 44.

**NOTE:** The debate hinges on David as the speaker of the psalm. If David is calling the new king “lord”, and the new king is the messiah, then the new king must be more than just David’s son. The usual conviction that the messiah is David’s son does not go far enough. It contends that Jesus is Messiah, Son of David, Lord, and Son of God. *Sacra Pagina*

24. Jesus was quoting from Psalms 110:1. The implication is that Jesus is, as acclaimed on Palm Sunday (Matthew 21:9-10), the long-awaited Messiah, Son of David. From verse 46 what was the response from the Pharisees?

**NOTE:** The Pharisees know the words of the Law, but they do not understand its meaning because they do not act on it. They use the Law as a goal rather than as a light. If their own wills were in line with God’s, they would not question the source of Jesus’ authority, let alone seek to kill him. *Cavins and Christmyer*

25. CONNECTION: Even with signs and messages pointing to Jesus as the son of David and Son of God, as the Messiah, the Pharisees and scribes would not believe. And yet Jesus' mother, Mary, saw him as her son as well as all those things she learned and which she kept in her heart. If there has been a time when you, like Mary, prayed with great concern and a heavy heart for someone, was there a special prayer that helped you through that time of trouble? If so, share that prayer with your small group.

Begin your prayer today in concert with our Blessed Mother, that her divine Son be with you throughout your day.



#### FINAL THOUGHT for the WEEK

Jesus is with us in our daily life, and yet we, like the Pharisees, may not always recognize him, even though there are signs all around us. Is there something in the past week that you can recognize as a sign that Jesus, our Immanuel, is indeed, “God with us”?

Read pages 109-114 in the *New Collegeville Bible Commentary: The Gospel According to Matthew* by Barbara E. Reid, O.P. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE) © 2010, 1991, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, D.C. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.