

Matthew 21-12-12b

We're ready now to look once again at Matthew chapter 22, Jesus having so effectively answered the challenge to his authority, to his person, to his identity. Those who would seek to discredit him and to belittle him in the eyes of others have been caused instead to marvel, at least those immediate disciples who were sent by the Pharisees. We've been seeing in recent weeks that there is a fresh expression of this idea in an odd way by deciding that Christianity is defined exclusively by Jesus and not by the rest of scripture, which sounds very persuasive.

What better arbiter of what is and isn't Christianity than Christ himself? But in taking parts of scripture and removing their authority and removing their pertinence and their balance, you end up with another gospel. You remember in the closing verses of the revelation, which in my view is not accidental, there is a warning about attacking the word of God. In chapter 22, verse 18, I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book.

If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book. And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the book of life, from the holy city, and from the things that are written in this book, part there being meros, the idea of inheritance. He who testifies to these things says, surely I am coming suddenly.

Amen, even so come Lord Jesus. The proper response to the word of God in its elegance, in its pertinence, in its divine power, in its revelation of who and what God is throughout should be to marvel, not to try to find ways to discredit, to remove, to claim that it's not God. This was the error of the Pharisees.

This was the error of the Sadducees. This was the error of the chief priests and scribes who claimed to have more knowledge than the common man, who argued that Jesus was leading astray the common people because they didn't know the scriptures as well as the leadership did. And in so doing, they went grievously astray and not only went astray themselves, but endeavored to lead others astray.

We're going to see that in the upcoming chapter when Jesus pronounces woes on these Bible scholars, on these religious leaders, on these who believe that their knowledge and their wisdom and their spirituality is superior. Well, the second section here after the Pharisees failed to trap Jesus in his words begins in verse 23. That same day, the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection came to him and asked him saying, teacher Moses said that if a man dies having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother.

Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married and having no offspring left his wife to his brother. Likewise, the second also and the third, even to

the seventh.

Last of all, the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her. Jesus answered and said to them, you are mistaken, not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God.

Isn't it interesting? This attack on Jesus' credibility, this effort to stymie him and stump him and leave him with no answer is based on scripture. It's a scriptural argument. It harks back to the Leveret Law.

These men have come to a conclusion that there is no resurrection and they are reading the law in a way that supports their foregone conclusion. It is so dangerous to isageete, to start with a position and then organize scripture to line up with it. Before we continue with Jesus' answer, I want to cover something quickly.

Turn with me to Psalm 137. This is one of the flagship passages that is criticized and held up as proof that the Old Testament is no longer to be taken seriously, that Jesus has abrogated and replaced God's revelation in the Old Testament. Psalm 137, by the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept.

When we remembered Zion. What is the setting here? By the rivers of Babylon. We did the entire book of Ezekiel verse by verse.

And you remember Ezekiel by the river Kabar. The rivers of Babylon are really the conjunction of rivers there helps define that entire area. And this is Israel.

This is the Southern kingdom, specifically in captivity after 586. This is in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, in the days of Ezekiel, in the days of Daniel. That's when this Psalm was composed.

Interestingly, this Psalm is ascribed to David in the Hebrew text. And you say, well, wait a minute, David didn't go into the Babylonian captivity. Well, keep reading.

But clearly the setting is in the captivity and in the early days thereof, because they have just sat down. They have just hung their harps upon the willows in the midst of it. This is in the early days of the captivity when the wound is still fresh, when the shock and the dismay and the discouragement are something that they've not been able to reconcile themselves to.

They haven't yet recovered from the defeat, the transport and the entirely new situation they find themselves in. We sat down by the rivers and wept. We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst of it.

For those who carried us away captive asked of us a song. And those who plundered us requested mirth, saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's

song in a foreign land? Then the author picks something that David wrote.

If I forget you, oh Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill. If I do not remember you, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth. If I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy.

In my humble opinion, this is the Davidic nugget. When they said, sing us a song of Zion, what are they looking for? They're looking for happiness and mirth. Sing us a happy song.

You like your city, sing us a happy song about Zion, about the mountain on which your capital city is built. This author says, you want to hear one of the songs of my city, one of the songs of Zion? If I forget you, oh Jerusalem, let me lose my right hand. If I do not remember you, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth.

If I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy. Thinking about Jerusalem, what is the author thinking of? It's destruction, it's obliteration, the burning and sacking and complete removal of God's temple, which defines the city of Jerusalem, which defined Mount Zion. So the captors request a song of happiness and joy from the captives.

Sing us a song about your city. The only song I can sing about my city is my memory of it in its destruction, in its separation from me that I'm now in a foreign land. How can I sing a song in a foreign land? How can I enjoy the situation? How can I contribute to your mirth and your celebration when we're the victims here? Remember, oh Lord, against the sons of Edom, I personally think this is Adam.

Remember, oh Lord, against the sons of Edom, it says in your text, the day of Jerusalem, those sons of Adam who said, bulldoze it down, raise it, raise it to its very foundations. You want me to sing you a song of my city? All I can think of are these who are clamoring for its utter and complete destruction. How is that going to be a happy song? Oh, daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed, happy is the one who repays you as you have served us.

You want to see some happiness? You want to hear a song of celebration? The next people to come along, when your day comes, when your capital is destroyed the way ours was, oh, daughter of Babylon, the ones who serve you the way you served us, they are the ones who are going to be happy. They will be happy who sees your little ones and dash them on the rock. It's a prediction.

It is a description. It is not a prescription for blessing from God. This doesn't say God will bless the one who slays your children.

This is irony. This is a gentle and sorrowful sarcasm. You're asking us whose city you just destroyed, whose children you just slew to sing you a happy song.

The next happy song you hear are going to be those who do to you what you have done to us. The ones who dash your children on the rocks as you did ours are the ones who will be happy. It's predictive.

This Psalm has been taken out of its context, taken without any allowance for the circumstance or the nature of its communication as a cruel, vindictive and wrathful God telling his people to smash babies on rocks. This Psalm was translated into Greek in the Septuagint. And if the explanation and interpretation that I have just offered you is not sufficient to convince, turn with me to the Gospel of Luke chapter 19.

Look at verse 41. Jesus is approaching Jerusalem, this same Jerusalem centuries later. He saw the city and wept over it saying in verse 42, if you had known even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace, but now they are hidden from your eyes.

For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side and level you and your children within you to the ground. They will not leave in you one stone upon another because you did not know the time of your visitation. In verse 44, the word that you have translated level is the exact same Greek word that translates smash in Psalm 137, nine.

Those who say the gentle Jesus would never comprehend, would never address, would never suggest that the death of children would be a part of judgment. Ought to look at the words of the Lord Jesus in red here because Jesus is directly alluding to Psalm 137 in this passage. The Greek word he uses, they will smash you and your children.

It's a rare word. It's only used here. And it quotes the Septuagint of Psalm 137, nine.

This is the gentle Jesus predicting as Psalm 137 predicts that these people and their children will be smashed within the city. Why? Because you did not recognize the time of your visitation. You did not recognize the time of your visitation.

All scripture is God-breathed. All scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness so that the people of God can become mature and be thoroughly equipped for every good work. It is so important to understand this.

How many people could have joined Jesus in ascribing woes to the Pharisees? Back in Matthew, just look forward a chapter. In chapter 23, Jesus is going to condemn the Pharisees. Look at verse 13.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. Verse 14, woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. 15, 16, over and over again.

Verse 19, fools and blind. You are misusing the word of God. You are misconstruing scripture.

Verse 23, woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. Verse 24, blind guides, straining in a net and swallowing a camel, on and on. But I want you to notice the beginning of this chapter, the beginning of the red ink.

The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. What does it mean to sit in the seat? This is the seat of authority. That's what a seat is.

A judge, a king's throne, sitting at the gate. Being seated in a seat was the privilege of those who were wielding, exercising authority. The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.

Therefore, Jesus says, whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do. He doesn't say if you agree. He doesn't say if you share their interpretation.

He doesn't say, unless I've told you otherwise. Whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works, for they say and do not do. And the rest of this chapter is going to be an indictment of what they do that does not comport with what they say.

If they did what they say, they would not be condemned as hypocrites. The definition of hypocrisy is to say one thing and do another, to appear one way and be a different way. Jesus said, these people, as they sit in Moses' seat, to the extent that they communicate the law of Moses, you should be careful to observe and do everything they say because they are the communicators.

They are the ones who have the scrolls. People don't have personal Bibles. They haven't got a copy of the Old Testament laying on a shelf in their homes.

The only place they get the law of Moses, the prophets and the writings are from the scribes and the Pharisees. As they sit in Moses' seat and communicate the Old Testament law, Jesus said, observe and do all of it. Do not follow them in their hypocrisy of failing to do what it says.

This is the indictment. These are the woes on the Pharisees is that they are not doing what Moses taught, what is in the law. I give you this as a supplement to what we covered last Wednesday with regard to the deconstructing and reassembling of Christianity by people who are throwing out the Old Testament law and saying, Jesus set it all aside.

Jesus doesn't condemn this and Jesus doesn't condone that. And we're only gonna live by the recorded words of Jesus in the gospels. Fine.

If you're gonna take Jesus in the gospels, you'd better go to Matthew 23 and hear him say that the law is to be heard and followed. All of it. Read the apostle Paul.

Don't cherry pick him. Don't take him out of context. Paul said, the law is holy, righteous and good.

This is the Jesus who said, one jot and one tittle will not pass from the law till all be fulfilled. Inevitably, when people begin to run afoul of the curse at the end of the book of Revelation and start taking away from the book of God's full and complete Revelation, there is no place to stop. Now I've got to take the first part of Matthew 23 out of my theology because Jesus is talking counter to my belief that we should throw out the Old Testament law because I think they had a virginity test, which has been completely misunderstood and misconstrued.

I think that it says, God will bless those who smash babies on rocks. And I just can't accept that. I don't believe that God is a God of wrath, that he would send Joshua in to kill the Canaanites down to the last person.

I don't believe that. I want God to be a God of love, a God of mercy, a God of forgiveness. And there are eight different places I can point to in Jesus' career where he told someone their sins were forgiven and there was no blood sacrifice.

Therefore, I believe sacrifice is not required. God can freely forgive anytime he wants without any sacrifice being in view. Therefore, the sacrificial system is nonsense and doesn't need to be looked at or be followed or be recognized.

I believe that Jesus elevated women and therefore anything that says wives be subject or husbands, you are to love your wives and wives you are submit to your husbands. And in Genesis where God told Eve that your desire will be to your husband, you are the help meet for him and so on. I throw all of that out because it doesn't fit my social sensitivity, my desire for things to be a certain way.

What happened to marveling at the word of God, to submitting ourselves under the mighty hand of God? It is wonderful to ask questions. You all know that in this church, every passage we come to, we ask questions, but we come like Nicodemus with a genuine belief that this is the word from God and it would not be what it is if it had not come from God. And that if I don't understand it, any flaw is in my understanding, not in the text, not in the Bible, not in the revelation.

Jesus said in John 5, you search the scriptures because in them you think you have eternal life. He doesn't dispute that that is the case. What he does say is these scriptures testify of me, the Old Testament scriptures witness to Jesus Christ.

How can you throw out the witness of the Old Testament scriptures to the Lord himself who himself labeled them as such? Look at the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Abraham tells Dives, they like to call him the rich man, when he requests that Lazarus be sent to his brothers so that they do not come to this awful place, Abraham says, your

brothers have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them.

If your brothers will not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not listen to someone raised from the dead. Who is the first fruits out from the dead? It's the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you start redefining Jesus, if you start taking Jesus' words out of his own mouth, heaven help you.

Did Jesus not give the parable of the rich man and Lazarus? Did he not quote Abraham as saying, your brothers need to listen to Moses and the prophets. And if they will not listen to the Old Testament scriptures, they will not listen to the New Testament scriptures that are the mind of Christ, the firstborn out from the dead, the resurrected one, capital O. And sooner or later, when you erode the witness of scripture in any part, you will start chopping up the New Testament. You'll not just have a Jefferson Bible, you're gonna have a few aphorisms and the hypocrisy of claiming that others are editing the Bible, that others are misusing the Bible when you yourself are doing the very same thing, Romans chapter two, in discarding and dismissing and discounting God's inspired word that declares itself to be profitable, that declares itself to be inspired.

Paul says things that are difficult to understand. Peter tells his correspondence. There are some things that are hard to grasp in Paul's writings and people twist them as they do the other scriptures to their own destruction.

If you twist the other scriptures, you're gonna twist Paul. If you twist the other scriptures in Paul, you're gonna twist the words of Jesus himself. That's what's happening today.

I warn you, I encourage you, when you see people trying to shoehorn modern social justice into the word of God, they are not marveling at Jesus' words. They are not marveling at the beauty, the integrity, the lofty wisdom that God's word represents. Yes, there are things hard to understand, but when we love God and love his word, it's a challenge.

It's fun to figure out. It's a puzzle. And when we solve it, it's like treasure that has been buried and you've got to do some digging.

You've got to do some detecting. You've got to spend some time. And when we find it, as God said, you seek me, you will find me when you search for me with all your heart.

It's not always easy. It's not always quick, but what a wonderful occupation. What a wonderful privilege to be the children of God.

And as we grow up, enter more and more into mature thinking, a better understanding of God's plan and purpose, a more lofty perspective on history, both divine and human. What a wonderful privilege. Don't miss it.

Don't let others take it from us. It is a movement that is growing in momentum, in scope,

in breadth. It is swamping social media.

It is swamping churches. We've seen many of the trends of the past. This is the next big thing.

It is Satan's own lie. It is as old as the snake in the tree saying, look at me, this is what the fruit can do for you. Wisdom.

Look how smart I am. I'm a talking snake. Eat this.

You'll be as wise as God. Sorry, no. Warning, danger, Will Robinson.

This thing is everywhere. It is creeping into literature. It is creeping into movies.

It is creeping into music. And forewarned is forearmed. The watchman on the wall is issuing the call.

Don't be taken unawares. All scripture is God's gift to us. All scripture reveals the Lord Jesus Christ.

Don't lose a jot or a tittle until all is fulfilled. Well, we'll see more about this marvelous response that Jesus gives in these four different challenge situations next time. Actually, next time we're going to have a Christmas special.

And when we resume in Matthew, we will resume our study of these things. But we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, we are so grateful that you have granted to us the gift of your presence and your power through your word and your spirit, all because of the saving, substitutionary, atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.

Those who would attack that work, who would redefine it and dismiss it are enemies of the cross and therefore have become enemies within the household. We know that this is a sign of the end times. We pray that through your spirit and your word, you will fortify us, give us discernment, give us discretion, help us to speak the truth to one another in love and to put on the full armor that you have provided for us so that we can stand in this evil day and having done all to remain standing.

We know that in so doing, we reflect the glory of our savior, the Lord Jesus Christ and your own glory. We thank you for that privilege and we ask all these things in Jesus name. Amen.