

## The King's Authority Affirmed (Matthew 22:15-46)

Good morning. My name is Matthew, one of the pastors here. It's a joy to gather and sit under the Word of Christ with you. If you would like, go ahead and turn in your bibles to Matthew 22:15-46.

This summer there has been a record number of rip current deaths in north Carolina. What makes them so dangerous is that they are hard to spot. At least if you are untrained, you wouldn't know anything is different looking at the surface. All looks normal but just beneath the waves is a narrow, powerful current headed away from shore.

What matters is what is beneath the surface, and so it is with our spirituality. This is what can make assessing one's spiritual life difficult. On the surface, we may have it all together. We might even look great. But God's not interested in surface spirituality, He's interested in what's going on in the depths of our being. And at depths of our being, in the center most core of who we are, there is a throne. That throne can only be occupied by one individual. In the final analysis, that throne is either occupied by Christ or by self. Either a current that exalts and cherishes Christ or a current that seeks to minimize Christ and that hates Christ. The question this morning is, who is the King of your heart?

If you do not follow Jesus, than your heart is your self. For believers, we have both, and won't be free from the struggle till glory. But our call and God's will for us, is that we progressively, in what the Bible calls the process of sanctification, destroy the flesh in us that dethrones Jesus and develop the spirit in us that enthrones Jesus. The bible says we all have this functional difficulty.

This morning we are going to take a look at some folks that have trouble with Jesus's authority. Jesus has been teaching and ministering as one with authority, and it causing an increasing rub with the religious elites of the time. Their patience is running out with this radical guy named Jesus, so they come up with a scheme to do away with Him. And what goes down today that Matthew records for us is a series of three verbal attacks. Jesus outmaneuvers them in each round. And then in the fourth round of this boxing match, Jesus takes the offensive with a solid uppercut to jaw. Our goal this morning is not to see how bad the Pharisees are, it is to see how bad we are and how great is the mercy and grace of King Jesus.

Let's pray.

### 1. The King's Authority over Politics

**22:15 Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. 16 And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. 17 Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" 18 But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? 19 Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. 20 And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" 21 They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." 22 When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.**

So heat is picking up in the hostility of the Pharisees toward Jesus. We see this in how they "went and plotted" how to "entangle" Jesus. The spent time, and energy, huddling together, brainstorming, how do we bring down Jesus? How do we get rid of Him?

They come up with a plan. They send their disciples, little minion pharisees, along with the Herodians to Jesus. Now the Herodians are interesting. These are not guys that the Pharisees would be caught running with. Herodians were Jews that had sided with Rome, had ties and loyalty to Herod and his family.

So you see the plan come out. They want to test Jesus. Now this is a trap. This is not, lets get the legal pad out and go ask Jesus some questions because we want to learn. This is, like I had the recent task of removing a rodent from my garage that had made it his happy home. I only saw it once, it was huge, but I heard it scurrying around every time i went in there. I thought it was a rat it was so big. What did I do, i assessed, went to Lowes to buy an appropriate trap. Inserted peanut butter, pulled back the claw, and carefully set it in its path. that's what these guys are doing here! Carefully, with the best of their ability to trap Jesus.

They begin with some false flattery, which are insincere, mean nothing, other than that they are trying make sure they get a response from Jesus. You're so smart and wise Jesus, please answer our question. Jesus knows they have malice in their hearts, calls them hypocrites.

Their question, is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Well whats the big deal with that question, right? Seems innocent.

Well the two groups present take radically different sides on the question. The Jews believe that giving taxes to Caesar is a sin, that the government is stealing from God. The Herodians, they had sided with Rome, so they believed it was totally appropriate to give taxes to Caesar. Thus the trap. No matter which way Jesus answers He is going to stir up trouble that will lessen His followers or else get Him even charged with treason.

How does Jesus respond? He transcends their trap. Show me the coin. Whose on it? It's Caesar, okay, well give to Caesar what is Caesars. And to God give back to God. Boom. Mic drop one. 1-nothing Jesus.

Instead of being forced to pick sides, He jukes them by agreeing with both of them. To the Pharisees, He affirms God's sovereignty. To the Herodians, He affirms the legitimacy of human government and authority.

What we see here in His teaching is that there are levels of authority. God is sovereign and He exists above everything. Government fits underneath, inside of that sovereignty. Jesus sees no problem with paying taxes to a pagan government—money in the tax that would go to pay for things like public spectacles and crucifixions, as well as to pay for worship services to pagan gods. Governments are legitimate and taxes are a legitimate way that they exercise their function. Paul continues this line of thinking, its worth looking at...

***Romans 13:1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment...7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.***

This is also not to say that government's and the people that lead them are not accountable to God. Everyone will stand accountable to God on the final day. None will escape. He will bring justice to bear in all its fullness.

What's further striking about this passage, is that Jesus further removes Himself from being a political revolutionary, what certainly, many Jews and zealots, wanted Him to be. Their hope was set on the Messiah coming to fix their world, locating their problem in Rome, needing to deal with physical realities. Rather, Jesus has come to fix the world, and Jesus locates the problem in the human heart, dealing with spiritual realities of sin and righteousness.

How might we get caught up politicizing the Savior. Making politics our functional god. Jesus is not disinterested in politics, and neither should we, but we must realize that ultimate authority and salvation is in God alone.

The crowds are amazed at Jesus ability to avoid the trap... not amazed into worship. The Pharisees are going to have to regroup and come again with a different attack.

## **2. The King's Authority over Theology**

**23 The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question, 24 saying, “Teacher, Moses said, ‘If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.’ 25 Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to his brother. 26 So too the second and third, down to the seventh. 27 After them all, the woman died. 28 In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her.”**

**29 But Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. 31 And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: 32 ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.” 33 And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.**

The Pharisees had to go regroup, and here we have the next group to attack Jesus, the Sadducees. They were sad you see, because they did not believe in the resurrection.

Their game plan was hoping that Jesus would stamp their doctrine that there’s no resurrection, which would cause lots of problems for Jesus. To get there, they lay out this ridiculous scenario, almost like its a joke, about seven husbands this woman has, and asking which will she be with in the resurrection.

You are wrong Jesus says. *On two accounts, you don’t know the Scriptures nor do you know the power of God.* Talk about a slam. These guys were professionals with the Scriptures, at least with the first five books of the Torah—they didn’t believe in the rest. It’d be like telling an experienced surgeon that he knows nothing about anatomy.

He speaks first to the marriage issue. Marriage is going to give way to a new existence in heaven. We will be like the angels. (Sadducees also didn’t believe in angels). They don’t believe in the power of God that He would raise people not only to a new life, but to a new way of life, similar but different to the current world.

Then for the resurrection, He points them back to the Scriptures. Exodus 3:6 drawing out the present tense statement here that God is telling Moses that He is currently, presently, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That is, those guys are alive in some form.

Jesus again transcends the trap, and turns it back on them.

Heaven’s joys will surpass this world’s joys. Those joys don’t hinge upon sexual or marital relations. There will be a change in sexual relations. The Scriptures, and clearly in Eph 5, communicate to us that sexual and marital relations in this life have the ultimate purpose of pointing to Christ’s relationship with His bride, His people. In the resurrection we will have a wedding feast. In that existence, marriage no longer serves to procreate or point to Jesus. We will live in the reality. For the married folks in this room, don’t hold on to your marriage joys. For the singles in this room, don’t hold on to your fascination with marriage. We all need to think more about the joy of Christ. This world is fleeting in its pleasures. Heaven’s relationships will not be marred by sin, intimacy and joy in Christ that we share with one another in full vulnerability and righteousness will be unbelievable. We must live in light of the resurrection.

Are we reading the Scriptures

### **3. The King’s Authority over Morality**

**34 But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. 35 And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” 37 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. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like**

**it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”**

By now the pharisees have recovered. This time they say, let's get Jesus ourselves. This lawyer, is not like a court case lawyer, he's an expert in the law. He comes out with the big guns to catch Jesus. It's a question of ranking moral commands, that's what they spent all their time doing. Which is the greatest commandment? It was a practice that was common in their day, they had 365 negative, 248 positive laws. Now trying to use the law to trap the Lord of the law. Not going to go well.

Jesus transcends the trap once again. He quotes Deut. 6:5 with the idea that God requires full devotion of all your being, at all times, and in every way. He must have the place of supremacy in our hearts. He alone is God. That means all of life is submitted under His Lordship. We can't separate our lives out. It all must glorify God. No secret closets. Nothing under the rug. Nothing in the shed. The human isn't divided and the life isn't divided. How we do this, we do it with love. Love is what God is looking for. Full, undivided, love, with our whole beings.

If we don't get love, we have legalism and self-glory.

But secondly, Jesus ties the command to love God with loving our neighbor. Some scholars think that when Jesus says the second is like the first, He is fusing the two together. That you can't separate them. Our vertical love and our horizontal love is what God is looking for. Can't think of one without the other.

We make the mistake on both sides. We can't think we love God if functionally we don't love others. And we can't love others if we don't love God.

And why these are the greatest, Jesus states, because all the Law and the Prophets depend on them. Every law you find in the Scriptures has in its root these two commands. Loving God and others is the DNA found inside every command. If you love God and love your neighbor as yourself, you will fulfill everything that God requires.

How is your love this morning to God and to others? How eager were you to come and worship Him with His people this morning? Was it a burden and a chore? How would you characterize your affections for God? Are you loving others?

Jesus showcases His authority over matters of morality.

#### **4. The King's Authority as the Christ**

**41 Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, 42 saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.” 43 He said to them, “How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, 44““The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet””? 45 If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?” 46 And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.**

It's Jesus turn to ask some questions. He goes straight after their biggest issue with Jesus. The main problem of the accusers is they refused to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. They were searching for a nationalistic liberator, not a spiritual Savior. They wanted self glory, not the glory of God.

Jesus sets up His own tension by stating two true and seemingly mutually exclusive statements, which He then will resolve. The first is whose son is the Christ? To which they rightly respond, the son of David. The Messiah is going to come in the line of David. This messiah that has been promised through Eve. He will be fully man.

Then he sets up the other statement. How then can David, inspired by the Holy Spirit, call him Lord, quoting from Psalm 110. David wouldn't call his earthly son God. So then we have that the Messiah would be fully God.

And there are the two truth statements that leave the Pharisees laying on the floor. God is staring at them straight in the face, I am fully human and fully God, you are looking at the Messiah. I am in the place of supreme authority.

This is the question we must wrestle with as well. Who do you say is the Christ? The Son of God? Do you believe that Jesus is fully human and fully God. Do you believe that He is the Messiah. This is the question Jesus holds out. And this will either turn you toward Him or away from Him.

We might not be trying to trap Jesus, but we are all in some way functionally trying to remove Him from the throne of our lives. Are you trying to trap Jesus or enthrone Him? What does that look like? It certainly looks like any sin in your life that's obvious. All sin is a dethroning of Christ and an exaltation of self. In that sin you are saying NO to Christ. I will not submit to your authority. I'm God. I'll do things my way. And that sin could be more subtle. The affections of your heart. Love of God and loving others, its the greatest. Do you cherish the gospel? Now you might say of course I do. But I want to get to the functional test. Are you really cherishing the gospel? Do you think about it when you are not here on Sunday mornings? Do you regularly rehearse it? Does it flavor your speech? You know this is true, the things you love most you talk about.

What's your relationship like with His word? With prayer? With His people? Gathering with the saints? Doing life with the people of God? Living on mission? We've all fallen short of the glory of God. We've all turned.

These Pharisees were knocked down, but unfortunately not begging for mercy, just getting more mad. Their questions are over. And this is the last we will see of the Pharisees attempts at verbally bringing down Jesus. They will leave and recover, and come back with physical violence and bent on executing Jesus.

Here's the deal. We don't need to be afraid of, or fight against Christ's authority? Here's why? He's a King of grace. I don't know what stands in the way between you putting Jesus on the throne this morning, but don't let it be fear. Don't let it be because you think He doesn't love you. Don't let it be your sin and shame and disgust with yourself.

Jesus ultimately is going to stop resisting the attacks of the Pharisees. In just a few days, He would lay down His life, willingly letting them arrest Him and take Him to trial, ultimately, as Isaiah 53 says, like a sheep that is led to the slaughter, He would not open His mouth, but continue trusting Himself to His Father.

The same God of the living from Exodus 3, the I AM. That is who is laying down their life. He who did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself and became obedient to the point of death, dying on a cross. The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve.

The grace is that the Sovereign One who had every right to destroy us, saved us at His own expense. He overcomes our hostility not by fighting against us, but by fighting for us. Taking our place on the cross He bears the full penalty for our sins.

Jesus, dying on the cross, and buried, would not stay buried. On the third day He rises from the grave in resurrection glory. God the Father would then exalt Him to the highest place, and give Him the name that is above every name, and as Ephesians 1 says, put all things under His feet. The prophecy comes to pass. Jesus is the King who reigns in all authority with all enemies under His feet. Sin, Satan, and death, destroyed by His power.

If we looked beneath the surface of your heart, is Jesus on the throne. I pray that is the case now and forevermore.