

- Last week we studied exclusively from several of the Gospel Accounts (remember, when we say “Gospels” we really mean “Gospel Accounts” since there is only one Gospel, the Gospel of Jesus Christ). Last week we “jumped around” in the scriptures to “piece together” the chronological events that were unfolding. In doing that we noted that more of the events that happened in this time were about Jesus’ teachings (including some of His parables) more than the miracles He performed. Even when He does perform miracles now, He seems to be doing in primarily to make a point which supports His teachings.
- This week we will be looking exclusively at Jesus’ teachings. We will pay special attention to the way Christ responds when the Jewish religious leaders figure out Christ is teaching against them (especially the Pharisees), and send spies acting sincere to ask Jesus what they think are hard questions. We will also be looking at the way Christ says we are to conduct ourselves as we wait for His return. Remember that Christ has come with his apostles to observe the Passover feast in Jerusalem and there are Jews from all over the world there to do the same thing.
- Before Christ even starts teaching one day, the Pharisees think they have their first “gotcha” question when they ask Him “by what authority” He does the things He does. Christ in turn asks them about the authority of John the Baptist’ teaching, whether it was from Heaven or men? The Jewish leaders realize they are stuck, because they reason if they say “heaven” then Christ will say “then why didn’t you believe him?” and if they were to say “man” the people would turn against them because the people were convinced that John the Baptist was a prophet. So, they refuse to answer, and Christ says He doesn’t have to answer their question then either. (Matthew 21:23-27 Mark 11:27-33 Luke 20:1-8)
- Christ tells The Parable of the Two Sons to help illustrate His point. He says a father told his two sons to go work in the vineyard. One said “no” and went anyway, the other son said “ok” then didn’t do it. He asks which one did the will of his father and they all say the first one did. So, Christ says it is like that with John the Baptist, the sinners rejected the message and first and then followed it, but you said you do what He said and then did not do it. (Matthew 21:28-32)
- Next Christ tells The Parable of the Wicked Tenants to further illustrate the point, and this time He will make it about Himself. Christ explains that a landowner leases his turnkey vineyard operation and leaves the country. He sends two groups of servants to collect his rent and they are all mistreated. Finally, he sends his son thinking they will respect him but instead they kill him because they think they will end up with his inheritance. He then asks the Pharisees what the landowner will do to them and they say he will put them to a miserable death. Christ quotes David in Psalm 118:22 saying that “the stone the builders rejected became the chief cornerstone.” The Pharisees realize the parable is about them because Christ is saying the God is like the landowner, the servants were like the prophets, and so God sent his Son thinking people would listen but they were rejecting Him. The

scriptures tell us that they wanted to arrest Him then and there but they were afraid of the people. (Matthew 21:33-46 Mark 12:1-12 Luke 20:9-19)

- Next, Christ tells The Parable of the Prince's Marriage. Christ explains a King prepares a wedding feast and the invited guest don't show up so the King has them killed and invites random people. One person who comes doesn't come properly dressed so the King has this person bound and thrown out. Christ says that this parable shows that "many are called but few are chosen." (Matthew 22:1-14)
- The Pharisees try another ("gotcha") approach regarding taxation. Luke's Gospel account even notes that the Pharisees were intentionally sending spies "pretending to be sincere." The Jewish people really did not like the fact that they were levied taxes by their Roman occupiers. (No one likes paying taxes, but it is much worse when you are being occupied and taxed). The Pharisees sent their followers along with some followers of Herod (the "King" in Jerusalem which the Romans had put in a "puppet"). This group of Jews and people more loyal to Rome ask Christ if it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar. They think if he says "yes" the people will turn against Him, and if he says "no" then Herod will have him arrested for tax revolt. Instead Christ asks for a coin and asks whose picture and signature is on it. They correctly say it is Caesar's. Christ tells them to pay Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to give God what belongs to Him. (Matthew 22:15-22 Mark 12:13-17 Luke 20:20-26)
- Frustrated with the Pharisees inability to "trap" Christ so far, a different group called the Sadducees take their turn trying to trap Him with a question that day. This involves a woman who marries seven brothers after each one dies. They ask Christ whose wife she will be in Heaven. Christ explains that the very question shows how little they understand the scriptures or God, for in Heaven there will be no marriage since we will all be like angels. (Matthew 22:23-33 Mark 12:18-27 Luke 20:27-40)
- The Pharisees hear that Christ has shot down the Sadducees marriage trap, so they decide to try again. This time they send a lawyer to ask Jesus what the greatest commandment in the Law is. We are not sure why they think this will trip up Christ but they may have wanted to see if He would reiterate the famous Jewish "shema" (their most famous and daily prayer) which He does, at least in the key parts. He says "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 neighbor as yourself." Then He says that "on these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:34-40 Mark 12:28-34)
- Christ end this day of testing by going on the offensive. He asks all of them who they think Christ will be the son of (remember they don't believe He is the Christ but they are looking for a Christ). They respond by saying that Christ will be the son of David (as was prophesied in 2 Samuel 7:12-16). Christ asks them that if this is true, why David refers to Christ as "Lord" in Psalms 110:1. They can't answer this one, and they stop asking questions then.

- Christ then goes even further on the offensive, using seven specific ways to condemn the Pharisees. 1) They do not practice what they preach. 2) They lead people away from God not to Him. 3) They value form over substance. 4) They focus on small things and ignore the important things. 5) They appear religious on the outside but are greedy on the inside. 6) Although they appear religious on the inside, they are lawless hypocrites on the inside. 7) They like to say they would not have persecuted the prophets, but that is exactly what they are doing. As far we know, this was Christ's last public sermon. (Matthew 23 Mark 12:38-40 Luke 20:45-47)
- Christ is watching people giving offerings. Many religious officials were contributing a lot of money. Then a poor widow puts in a couple of coins and Christ says to his disciples that she gave more than anyone because she gave all she had. (Mark 12:41-44, Luke 21:1-4)
- Christ then predicts what will happen in the future. He notes that the Jerusalem will be destroyed, and lots of wars and natural disasters will happen, then Christ will come again. (Matthew 24:1-31 Mark 13:1-27 Luke 21:5-28)
- Lots of people use elements of these verses to try to predict that the world will be ending soon. In fact, any time there are wars and natural disasters, people will say the end of the world will happen soon. It is important to note that people have been saying that for centuries when destructive wars break out and natural disasters occur. Christ himself said that no one would know when He would come again (Matthew 24:36 Mark 13:32) and Paul writes that this day will come "like a thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:2)
- Christ talks about the importance of being ready since we don't know when judgement will come. He tells two parables to illustrate this fact. The Parable of the Ten Virgins talks about five young women who plan adequately for a wedding party with enough oil for their lamps, and five who are not prepared so they must go out to buy oil and miss the whole thing. The Parable of the Talents is about a man who gives three servants 10 coins, 5 coins and 1 coin. The persons with 10 and 5 invested them and were rewarded. The servant with 1 coin hid it because he was afraid to lose it. So, the master took it away from him and punished him. (Matthew 25:1-30)
- Finally, Christ says that at judgement people will question Him when He says they did not perform acts of service for Him. People will then ask, when did we ever have the chance to serve you? He will tell them that when they passed up the chance to serve others, they were passing up the chance to serve Him. (Matthew 25:31-46)

Questions:

1. Why does Christ use John the Baptist when the Pharisees question His authority?
2. What is The Parable of the Two Sons and what does it mean?
3. What is The Parable of the Wicked Tenants and what does it mean?
4. What Old Testament scripture does Christ quote in The Parable of the Wicked Tenants?
5. What happens after Christ tells The Parable of the Wicked Tenants?
6. What is The Parable of the Prince's Marriage and what does it mean?
7. How do the Pharisees try to use the question of taxation to trap Christ? What happens?

Originally developed by Madison Laird for high school study at the East Foothill Church of Christ in San Jose, CA following a curriculum outline by Aaron Curtis. Edited by Betty Brown of Jackson, TN. Material may be used free of charge without license or royalty. Questions or comments: madison@madisonlaird.com

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A Day of Testing and The Coming Destruction

Matthew 21:23-25:46 Mark 11:27-13:23 Luke 20:1-21:28

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8. How do the Sadducees try to trap Christ with a question about marriage? How does He answer?
9. What does Christ say the Greatest Commands are? What depend on them?
10. At the end of the day of testing, how does Christ put an end to it?
11. What seven things does Christ say about the Pharisees in His last public sermon?
12. Why does Christ say a widow who gave a couple of coins gave more than anyone?
13. What are three things Christ predicts will happen before He comes again?
14. Can anyone predict when the world will end and Christ will come again?
15. What two parables does Christ tell about being ready for judgement?
16. What does Christ say when we are not serving others we are doing?

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