

## Lesson 19: Chapter 22 ” The great commandment”

### Servant’s preparation:

[http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew\\_22.pdf](http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_22.pdf)

### Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

### Remember:

Last lesson, chapter 21, we discussed Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, His cleansing of the temple, and His interactions with religious leaders. It includes the parable of the two sons, the parable of the wicked tenants, and Jesus being questioned about His authority.

### Memory Verse:

*22:21 “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s”*

### Lesson Opener:

In our world today, it’s easy to be on the go, and honestly, it’s easy to end up just getting distracted. Can anyone relate to that? Has anyone ever been distracted? whether it is being distracted on our phones and becoming what some people call phone zombies; we could get distracted with the newest TV Or even getting engrossed in the latest topics. We could even get distracted with our decision making. Someone probably, again, is distracted right now.

You’re probably thinking about, what am I going to eat after service? What am I going to do?

According to Harvard Business Review, we as people We make 35,000 decisions every day. Thirty-five thousand, not every week, not every month, every day. Before coming church, you probably thought, Should I buy food out? Should I just eat what’s in the fridge and cook? You probably changed what you wanted to wear maybe five times this morning. You probably are just figuring out what to wear next week. We make decisions about what we’re going to say, how we’re going to say it. And with all the things that fight for our attention and all the decisions that we make as we go about our lives on a day to day, my question for us is, **what is the most important thing to do?**

We will see the answer when Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment.

### Lesson Goal:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

## Lesson Body:

### **The Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-14)**

This parable as presented to us by the Lord Jesus applies to the Jews, particularly the chiefs who have rejected the Messiah's heavenly kingdom. This applies in some way or another to every soul that rejects the real kingdom inside it. There are many meditations on this parable, here is one of them:



- ✓ The king is God
- ✓ His son is Jesus Christ
- ✓ The bride is His church
- ✓ His 1<sup>st</sup> group of servants were the forefathers like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who got the promise.
- ✓ His other servants were the prophets who were beaten and killed or the apostles and other disciples in succession.
- ✓ The wedding is Christ's incarnation [The Communion]
- ✓ 1<sup>st</sup> group to be invited represent the Jews.
- ✓ 2<sup>nd</sup> group to be invited are the Gentiles.

Imagine how God must have felt when He invited many people to an amazing party [heaven] but every day, He would see people making up excuses not to go. Jesus explained that the gate is narrow, and path is not easy, that is why the first would be last and the last would go first.

*Let us think how to make sure we are among those accepting His invitation.*

When the banquet was ready, He sent His servant to tell the guests, 'Come, the banquet is ready.' But they all began making excuses. One said, 'I have just bought a field and must inspect it. Please excuse me.' He doesn't care to come. Another said, 'I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I want to try them out. Please excuse me.' Guess he didn't want to come, either. Another said, 'I just got

married, so I can't come.' Everyone that the king had invited to the feast had some excuse for not coming.

The group with these useless excuses, temporal concerns and sensual enjoyments, their oxen, lands and wives, declined and disrespected the offer. They neglected this salvation, and they preferred secular enjoyments to the kingdom of Christ. They persecuted the apostles and early church. The king got wrathful and punished them, here Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Roman army about 40 years later.

What the Lord did with the Jews, He does with us all. He does not get tired of sending servants to call us to this wedding in all different ways, so we accept that He works in us. He calls us by means of servants, His gospel, and the surrounding events, as well as He talks to us by His Spirit that is in us. He is standing at the door, knocking, and waiting for us to let Him in to our hearts.

The cost for the invitation is His own life. He offers us His sanctified body and blood, spiritual food and drink, a feast for the new kingdom. It has all been prepared, waiting for us to enter the sanctified banquet, which in its essence is to rise up to the heavenly life.

Actually, this banquet feast is offered every day on **the altar, during liturgy**. Jesus is inviting each of us to join to partake of His body and blood to get closer to Him. Do we feel how precious this invitation is? Do we realize how hard it is for God to prepare this feast as well as heaven for everyone then people start making silly excuses, telling Him how busy they are? We do not want to keep ignoring this invitation till the time comes when God tears the unaccepting invitees off and we see others who were last become first and enter heaven happily.

Then the king opened the wedding doors to the Gentiles. It was an invitation to everyone, and forgiveness of all the past. The bad were invited, not to remain bad, but in order that they might become good. These were invited from anywhere and everywhere, every economic status and every walk of life. Once at the wedding feast they were clothed with Christ's righteousness. However, one person tried to make it on his own with his old "clothes" and was rejected.

The garment of life is our work; this idea is mentioned so no one presumes that faith alone is sufficient for salvation. Not everyone accepts the grace of God that sanctifies him, actually, they are few who receive it and respond to it. It is then that they receive the garment of "the sanctified life, appropriate for the divine wedding.

The wedding guest without the wedding garment was he who came but did not care about the bridegroom enough to take the time to present to him a purified soul through repentance and works of faith.

The king/God called upon him to confess but he failed to ask for forgiveness.

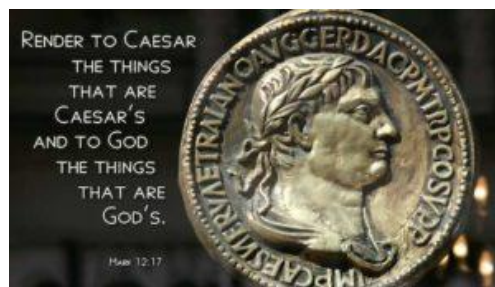
"Not having on a wedding-garment?" Not having put off the old man and put on the new, not being made a new creature, not having put on the Lord Jesus Christ. It also refers to Baptism.

It is not God's desire that any should perish; He has made the invitation for us to come to salvation. The “chosen” are those who both accept the invitation and comply with its condition.

### **The Pharisees: Is It Lawful to Pay Taxes to Caesar? (22:15-22)**

The Pharisees had instructed their disciples and the Herodians to speak in this seemingly friendly manner to our Savior, that they might put Him off His guard, and thereby trap Him; thinking that Jesus like other men could be led away by flattery.

Jesus declared a spiritual principle: ‘Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s! The Christian attitude of obedience to Caesar or to the rulers and giving the nation’s rights such as taxes and other obligations whether they be social or financial, is a true testimony for the account of God Himself.



St. Augustine says, “Just as Caesar asks for his image on the currency, likewise God asks for His image in us.” This means that he who finds his image in us, possesses us and enslaves us. If God sees His image in us, it becomes His right to possess us as much as we possess Him. Likewise, if Satan sees his image in us, we cannot escape from him, but he rather has the right to possess us and enslave us. If the world sees its image in us, then it enslaves us, and humiliates us under its feet.

### **The Sadducees: What About the Resurrection? (22:23-33)**

Jesus has stunned the Pharisees and the Herodians, and now the Sadducees [the party which the chief priests belong to] try to test Him. They do not believe in after life.

To argue against resurrection of the dead, the Sadducees proposed an extreme hypothetical case of a woman who married in turn seven times to brothers.

They assumed that life after death was very similar or the same to life now, hence marriages would still be intact. The Lord answered their question from two aspects from the logical aspect, the eternal life is a sublime one, on the level of angels, and from the writing aspect, God is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. He is the God not of the dead but of the living. Also, when we are raised from the dead, we carry the kind of sex we have, but we do not practice the sex function.



### **The Scribes: Which Is the First Commandment of All? (22:34-40)**

In this brief answer the Lord showed us the commandment concept through the Christian outlook: that the commandments are all unified in one, undivided one from the other. If our love to God is boundless and is the greatest of all the commandments, our love to our brothers is not any less in importance. For, we cannot love God, who is invisible, away from our love to our brothers who are visible. By our love to God and to man we make perfect all the commandments and the prophets.

He who loves God supremely cannot live in disobedience to Him. One who loves his neighbor as himself, will seek the welfare of those around him.

### **Jesus: How Can David Call His Descendant Lord? (22:42-46)**

Jesus turns the tables on the group of Pharisees and asks them a question, quoting from Psalm 110:1. He wanted to show the people that the source of all the misleading questions of His opponents was their ignorance of the prophecies related to the Messiah.

The promised Messiah was identified in the Scriptures as the son of David. Christ is David's Lord eternally and his son according to time. He is David's Lord, born of God the father. He is also David's Son, born a son to the virgin Mary, and conceived through her by the Holy Spirit. Let us hold on strongly to both of them.

Finally, our Lord put the four great sects of the Jews [Herodians, Pharisees, Sadducees, and the scribes] to silence, in one day, one after the other.

### **Takeaways and Lesson Delivery Ideas:**

#### **Option 1:**

#### **How to love God and your neighbor?**

##### **What does it mean to love God?**

According to the Bible, loving God means keeping His commandments.

That is what Jesus taught when He said: "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." John 14:15.

Pretty straightforward, right?

Of course, to keep God's commandments, we need to understand what those commandments are. And the only way to do that is to read and study the Bible, just as we are doing now.

There is a common misconception among some that if we simply do what we think is right then we will please God.

Granted, that is usually the case.

However, we can sometimes get into big trouble when we do that.

Consider the following warning from the Book of Proverbs:

“There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” - Proverbs 14:12.

Once we read and understand this scripture, we can no longer accept that following our gut is how we please God.

There are things that God commands us to do that sometimes will not make sense to us or are not what we want to do. [Give examples]

**We need to do them anyway. That's the point!**

That is how we show our love for God, and that is how we demonstrate our faith. True faith means believing and trusting God in all things, all the time.

Not just when it is convenient.

The way that we show our love for God, is by keeping His commandments. To do this, we need to commit ourselves to studying the Bible regularly and then acting on what we have learned.

### **LOVING OUR NEIGHBOR AS OURSELVES**

Immediately after teaching about the greatest commandment, Jesus also spoke about what the second greatest commandment is, to “love our neighbor as ourselves.” (Mathew 22:38)

Before we consider what, it means to love our neighbor, we first need to understand who our neighbor is.

Quite simply, our neighbor is anybody that comes into our lives.

God brings people into our lives for specific reasons. He always has a plan! (Jeremiah 29:11)

Sometimes it is to discipline us (Proverbs 3:12).

Other times, it is for reasons that we may not ever understand (Isaiah 55:8-9).

**One thing is for certain, once God has brought somebody into our lives, our job is to love them!**

Of note, Jesus did not simply say, “You shall love your neighbor.”

No, that is only part of what Jesus said.

The full command that Jesus gave was to: “Love our neighbor as ourselves.” (Mathew 22:38)

Adding the word “yourself” to the end of that command is significant.

Loving your neighbor as yourself means prioritizing their well-being and happiness as much as your own. It involves showing kindness, compassion, and understanding, and striving to create a community where everyone feels valued and supported. It doesn't necessarily mean that you always want to be with that person as this love might only be felt towards our close people, but you love everyone else through your actions and prayers for them.

To love our neighbors, we must try to take the time to get to know them.

That is what Jesus did, and He is the example that we are to follow.

### **CONCLUSION**

It should not surprise us that the two greatest commandments in the Bible are about love.

**God IS love!** (1 John 4:16)

## **Option 2:**

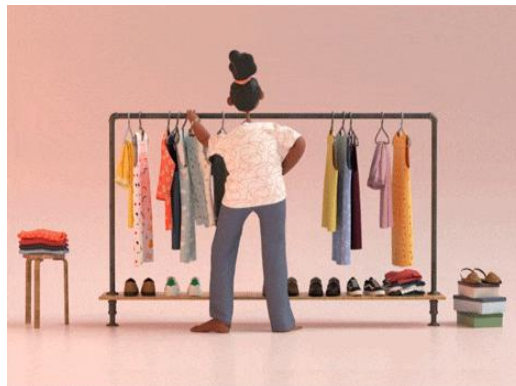
### **What is the garment in the parable of the Wedding feast and how do we get it?**

It is important to understand the garment and the attitude of the guest not wearing the garment. Let's first look at what the garment represents.

The Bible tells us exactly what the garment of this parable means. Revelation 19:7-8 states: "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is ***the righteous acts of the saints***"

It is all about personal righteousness → good decisions made by the individual. This requires repenting of sin and living according to God's will. The Bible uses clothing as an analogy to show how we "put on" behavior that is pleasing to God.

The new invitees were either dressed properly from home or they would ask the King's servants how to get the proper attire before entering. That represents us who are invited to heaven, and we need to change ourselves to match properly or ask God's people how to repent and be ready for heaven. It is not hard but needs one to respect the precious invitation.



### **One piece at a time**

- Every morning, we get out of bed and dress for the day.
- We put our clothing on one piece at a time, layer by layer.
- Character change is, likewise, put on one piece at a time—one action at a time.
- Some things are easier than others. If you have had anger issues for years, it can be very hard to change to a calmer nature, but it can be done.
- If someone is filled with pride and lacking humility, just a single trial can reshape him to a humble person. Ask anyone who has lost a job or gone through a life-changing event.
- Characters can be altered. But it requires that we have a deep desire to change.
- Thus, one must come to the point where he or she has a *desire to change* for any hope of a new "garment" to be worn and with that desire we must also have commitment to follow through.
- Christian life is a life of REPENTANCE.

### **Willful defiance**

- ✓ With this in mind, we return to the guest at the supper who was found to be lacking the right garment.
- ✓ This man did not have on the right garment *by choice*. Knowing what was required, he willfully chose to come to the feast without wearing the right clothing.
- ✓ Further, he was determined not to put on these garments or ask the servants at the door to help him dress properly.
- ✓ He was opposing the king and everything the marriage feast represented.
- ✓ It's important because the man was making a statement against what the marriage feast represented. His presence was an offense to the king.
- ✓ It is shocking to realize that our actions have consequences. In our modern ways of thinking we'd like to pretend that our choices and actions don't matter all that much and that everything is relative, but this parable shows that simply isn't true.



### Many are called, but few are chosen

The parable concludes with a statement from Christ that "many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14).

The word "chosen" here applies to those who not only receive a call, but willingly choose to come, being sure they are dressed in the right garment, and remain committed to the Kingdom of God. To them the Kingdom means *everything*.

They are willing to pay any price, make any sacrifice, and remain committed for life to God and His values.

How about you? Are you missing a garment while thinking you are all dressed and ready? This parable is a wakeup call for all of us to make sure we wear the right garments of godly righteousness!