

## Two Important Questions.

Text: Matt 22:34-46

Suggested Hymns:  
449, 340, 359, 324, 297

- 1) Which Is The Great Commandment In The Law?
- 2) What Do You Think About The Christ?  
Whose Son Is He?

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 22:34-46, <sup>34</sup> *But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.* <sup>35</sup> *Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying,* <sup>36</sup> *”Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?”* <sup>37</sup> *Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’* <sup>38</sup> *This is the first and great commandment.* <sup>39</sup> *And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’* <sup>40</sup> *On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”*

<sup>41</sup> *While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,* <sup>42</sup> *saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?”* *They said to Him, “The Son of David.”* <sup>43</sup> *He said to them, “How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying:* <sup>44</sup> *‘The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”’?* <sup>45</sup> *If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?”* <sup>46</sup> *And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

<sup>34</sup> *But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.”* The Pharisees and the Sadducees were the two great ecclesiastical parties in Judea at the time of Christ.

Like the two great political parties in our country, they were sternly opposed to each other, ridiculing each other, one disputing the other’s theories; and almost every Jew sided with the one party or the other.

Christ kept aloof from both, and the consequence was that, though disagreeing in almost everything else, these two parties, the Pharisees and Sadducees, joined hands in one thing at least, in opposing Christ, and in making Christ the object of their hatred and common attacks.

The Pharisees were the first to attack Christ. They tried to entangle Him in His talk by putting to Him the question, *“Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?”*<sup>1</sup> But they failed completely.

Then the Sadducees tried Him. They told Him a story of a woman who had seven husbands in succession, and asked Him whose wife she would be in the resurrection of the dead; for they did not believe in the resurrection. But Christ put to silence the Sadducees also, as we are informed at the beginning of our text.

He told them that in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven; and then He called their attention to the saying of God in the Old Testament, *“<sup>32</sup> I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*’ God said this a long time after the death of these patriarchs; and from this point Christ argues that there must be a resurrection, for *“God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”*<sup>2</sup>

This shameful defeat of the Sadducees in the presence of a great multitude of people gladdened the hearts of the Pharisees, and they held a meeting, not for the purpose of congratulating Christ upon His victory over the Sadducees, but for the purpose of plotting against Him and forming a question to puzzle Him, a question which He would not be able to answer, so that He would lose His honour and esteem in the eyes of the common people.

Their plans against Christ were evil indeed, but the question which they concluded to put to Him is an important question; and equally important is the question which Christ, in turn, put to them in our Gospel. Accordingly, let us consider today, with the help of God’s Holy Spirit, *Two Important Questions*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Which Is The Great Commandment In The Law?**

The result of the Pharisees’ deliberations is revealed in the following words,  
<sup>35</sup> *Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying,*  
<sup>36</sup> *“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?”*

Note well that the lawyer who, by the way, was not an attorney, but a man well versed in the Law of God, in the Scriptures, asked the question to test Christ, that is, to trap Him.

The Law, in the minds of the Pharisees, did not consist of the Ten Commandments only; but their law, or what they considered the law, consisted of no fewer than 248 commandments of a bidding character, and 365 commandments of a forbidding character. Now the Lord was to say which of these 613 commandments was the greatest.

No doubt, this was a point of dispute upon which they argued themselves and concerning which they could not come to an agreement. It was a problem which, in their estimation, no mortal was able to solve. Did they get the satisfaction to hear the Lord say He could not answer their question?

No; straightway Jesus said, “*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*”<sup>38</sup> *This is the first and great commandment.* <sup>39</sup> *And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’*<sup>40</sup> *On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.*” That settled it. The Pharisees could not say another word.

Undoubtedly they looked at each other in silent acknowledgement of their defeat. But let us examine Christ’s admirable answer. What does He say is the great commandment in the Law? In one word, LOVE.

If you love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, then you can say that you have kept all the commandments on the first table of the Decalogue. And if you love your neighbour as yourself, and not less than yourself, then you can say that you have kept all the commandments that are on the second table.

Love to God and to your neighbour is the sum and substance of the Law. Take any commandment you may find in the writings of the Old Testament, in the Law and prophets, and you will find that it demands love.

If it is a commandment setting forth your obligations to God, you are thereby commanded to love God; if it is a commandment setting forth your obligations to the neighbour, then you are thereby commanded to love your neighbour.

Love is, therefore, the great commandment in the Law. Love is that commandment which covers the entire field of the Law. Love is the very soul of

the Law; and as the body is inanimate, dead, when the soul has departed from it, so is the Law a dead letter without love. Love must pulsate in every commandment.

It is of vast importance to know this. The Law is a divine institution, and God means every word He says. He is not trifling or playing with us, when He says, *Thou shalt*, or, *Thou shalt not*.

How important, then, for us to know that no commandment is fulfilled without love. The mere outward performance of the letter of the Law with the hands, feet, or mouth is never an observance of the Law. If there is not love in the heart, and if such observance does not proceed from true love to God and to our neighbour the commandment is not kept.

Nevertheless, is not this the common, almost universal understanding of the Law? Do not most people think that they keep a commandment if they do according to the letter, regardless of what their hearts may say and think?

Do not most people think that the Law of God deals with outward works only, and that the commandment is kept if the outward work is done? But no, my friends; you may keep every commandment strictly to the letter, and yet be an offender and a frivolous transgressor of every commandment.

You are a transgressor every time your obedience does not proceed from love. You may keep your hands clean from outright murder, but you are a murderer, nevertheless, if your heart is not free from hatred and malice.

You may abstain from adultery and fornication, but you are an adulterer, nevertheless, if there are unchaste desires in your heart.

You may leave your neighbour's property intact, but you are a thief nevertheless, if you envy and begrudge him what he possesses. Every commandment aims at the heart, and without love not a single commandment is truly fulfilled. Love is the fulfilling of the Law.

And how grossly most people misunderstand the fulfilling of the Law concerning its stringency! Do not most people think all they have to do respecting the Law is to keep it as much as they can, to the best of their ability? Do not most people think they have perfectly done their duty over against the

divine Law when they have partly fulfilled it, and that the Lord will surely be merciful and forgive them what they have sinned against His commandments?

No, my dear friends, in this way God will not forgive you the slightest sin. If you want to get to heaven by the Law, you must keep it perfectly, letter and spirit. Does not Jesus say, “*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*’ ...And ... ‘*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*’”?

How, then, dare you contradict Him and say, “*No; I shall love God with only a part of my heart, soul, and mind; and my neighbour to some extent only, but not nearly as much as I love myself?*”

Note, that your ability is not taken into account here in the least. The Law of God demands perfect, full obedience during all the days of your life, with not a single transgression.

## **2. What Do You Think About The Christ? Whose Son Is He?**

Having explained the Law, the Lord Jesus turns to the Gospel. The soul and centre of the Gospel is Christ. The other important question answered in our Gospel is: “*What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?*”

We read, “*What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?*” *They said to Him, “The Son of David.”*”

Christ, the Messiah, according to divine prophecy, was to be the Son of David, that is, a descendant of David. The answer of the Pharisees was correct. But it was correct in part only, not in full. They made reference to Christ’s human nature only, to the fact that He was to be man.

They knew well enough that He was to be God at the same time; or they should have known this at least, because if there is anything clearly exhibited in the Old Testament, it is the doctrine of Christ’s divinity.

But what did the Pharisees, and the Jews in general, care for their Messiah’s divinity? Their great hope and comfort was that He was to be a man, and a powerful man, a worthy son of their great king David, a mighty ruler who would restore the glory of their downtrodden race and make Israel the leading nation in the world.

However, Christ corrects them and says, ***“How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying: <sup>44</sup> ‘The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”’? <sup>45</sup> If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?” <sup>46</sup> And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.”***

The passage to which Jesus refers here is found in Psalm 110, where David speaks of the promised Messiah and applies to Him the name of God, calling Him Jehovah. This passage is very significant in the connection used.

The Pharisees had overlooked the important fact that the Messiah is God because of their conception of a worldly ruler, whom they expected to be a powerful man who would make quick work of his enemies and lay them prostrate at his feet.

Now Jesus quotes David who calls Christ his Lord, thereby indicating that the Messiah was not to be a worldly but a spiritual ruler; that His power was not to be a worldly but a divine power; that He was to overcome not bodily enemies but enemies in the realms of truth, enemies opposing God’s will and their Saviour’s blessed work for them.

Jesus Himself emphasises the fact that He, the promised Messiah, is not only David’s Son, but David’s Lord at the same time; that He is not man only, but God and man in one person.

This is vastly important. If Christ was not God, no one could be saved. If Christ was not God, then all that would be left to us would be the Law.

The commandments would then be the only way to heaven; and whom can the commandments lead to heaven? Who can say in truth that he loves God with all his heart, soul, and mind, and his neighbour not less than himself? No one!

But Christ is God, true God, the only Son of God, begotten of the Father from eternity. Christ came down from heaven and was made man, born of the Virgin Mary. Christ fulfilled perfectly, in our place and stead, all the commandments of the divine Law. As our Substitute, for us, He loved God with all His heart, with all His soul, and with all His mind, and His neighbour as Himself.

All this He did as a Man. But never could He have done that in our stead, had He not been God at the same time.

Christ took upon Himself all our guilt, and suffered the wrath of God resting upon a whole sinful world, and atoned for all our transgressions by His painful suffering and bitter death on the cross.

And though He did all this for us as a Man, He could never have performed the great work of redeeming the fallen human race, had He not been God blessed forever.

Let us implore God, then, to keep us steadfast in the faith in Christ's divinity, without which there is absolutely no salvation.

In our days there is a great falling away from that comforting faith. In our days you meet many a person who claims to be a Christian, but, if you ask him, *What do you think of Christ? whose Son is He?* he will say, like the Pharisees, *He is the Son of David.*

Christ was a man, they will say, a good man, a man who taught us to love one another. But they either do not believe at all, that Christ is the Lord, or they consider His divinity of minor importance.

In their estimation the main thing in the Christian religion is not to believe in Jesus Christ, the true God and Saviour, but to take Jesus for a model and to follow Him in well-doing. This is a flat denial of the Gospel and a perversion of the divine truth.

First believe in Jesus, the Lord and Saviour, and consider that the main thing, and then follow Him, and you will truly follow Him; for you cannot follow Him without faith. The great central truth is this, as written in Acts 16:31, ***“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.”*** Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 12:14

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 22:32