

Rejected through unbelief

Matthew 22 vv.15-22.
Mark 12 vv.13-17.
Luke 20 vv.19-26.

"Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth. ... tell us therefore what thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?"

A few Pharisees are standing by the Lord Jesus to all appearances friendly. They praise Him as being honest, as one who always speaks the truth. But their eyes betray a false gleam and their hearts are filled with hatred.

Look, there they stand. They wait tensely for Jesus' answer. They want to catch out this Nazarite. It is a trick question.

If Jesus says: "You should not pay that tax, but refuse it," they will go at once to the Romans and report Him as one who refuses to pay what is due to the Emperor - as a disturber of the peace.

If however He replies: "Yes you must pay, it is your duty so to do," then they will say to the Jews, "Jesus is a traitor, He is a friend of the Romans."

How evil and deceptive of them, was it not? ... They look at Him with cunning in their eyes.

The Lord knows however what is in their hearts. Hear what answer the Lord Jesus gives: "Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money."

They then show Him a Roman "penny". Upon these coins stood the impression of Caesar's likeness.

"Whose is this image and superscription?" the Lord asks of them. "Caesar's" is their prompt reply.

"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."

There is silence for a moment. They look rather disconcerted. They can say nothing against that answer, nor can they blame Jesus either before the Romans or before the Jews. They go away ashamed. Jesus has given them a demonstration of His wisdom and omniscience.

Matthew 22 vv.23-33.
Mark 12 vv.18-27.
Luke 20 vv.27-40.

A little later some more men approach. It is a rather important looking group. Who are they then? ... They are Sadducees.

Can you still remember that the Sadducees did not believe that the dead shall rise again. They said: "Death is death. Live a happy and trouble-free life for heaven and hell do not exist."

They are now coming to Jesus with a very peculiar story. It is however their intention to make fun of the idea of a resurrection. Just listen.

"Master," they begin, "there were seven brethren: the first took a wife but died soon afterwards. The widow was left alone, for she had no children. Then the second brother married the same woman, but he too died childless. A little later she became the wife of the third brother, but that marriage did not last long, for the third brother died also. To be brief, all seven brethren were married, one after the other to this woman, without any of them leaving children. Last of all, the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she?"

There now, Jesus must now give them an answer to this question. They look at Him with a mocking smile. They are curious to see what He will say about it. They do not believe in the resurrection of the dead.

Well, it is a difficult question, is it not? Can you answer it?

"Ye do err," says the Saviour calmly. "Ye do err, not knowing the Scripture, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage." He thus tells them that marriage is for this present time, not for eternity.

He is silent a moment, but then the Lord continues: "Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." By this the Lord means that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are not dead. Though their bodies rest in the grave, their souls live.

The Sadducees know not what to say to these things, and they too go away in shame.

Matthew 23.
Mark 12 vv.38-40.
Luke 11 vv.37-54.
Luke 20 vv.45-47.

All the time the Jewish leaders are trying to catch Jesus in His words. They hope fervently that the hated Nazarite will say something wrong, but all their attempts fail. The Lord always gives a suitable answer. Jesus answers all their catch questions in the correct manner. He answers those questions in such a way

that they are unable to ~~and~~ blame Him.

Do you know why that is? ... Because the Saviour knows what is in their hearts. He knows what their motives are in asking these questions. He knows their falsity, their hatred and their envy.

The people stand there and listen. The Lord Jesus then turns to the multitude and warns them about their leaders. He tells them that the Scribes and Pharisees are hypocrites, who are deceiving the people. Eight times He pronounces that fearful "Woe unto you" over those wicked, deceptive Pharisees and Scribes. He pronounces the curse of God upon those leaders.

The latter stand there listening to His condemning words. O, the hatred and envy increases in their hearts. Their eyes gleam and their fists are clenched. They are trembling with anger. Why is that? ... Because they know that Jesus is speaking the truth. They are indeed hypocrites and deceivers, but the people must not know that - no, the people must think of them as holy, pious men.

They fear that the people will believe in the Lord Jesus again, and if that happens, then all respect for them will disappear. O, if they could but kill Him, could they but stop His mouth.

Read over again what the Lord said about the Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23. Make sure you do!

Mark 12 vv.41-44.
Luke 21 vv.1-4.

In the forecourt of the temple there stood a treasure chest. Into this, those who walked by would cast some money. That money was used for maintaining the house of God and the services of God's house. There was so much needed, and everything cost money.

We have collections in our churches and chapels too, do we not? Sometimes there is even more than one collection. There may be one for the poor and another for the church building. Everything that is needed has to be paid from that money.

Well now, in the temple at Jerusalem there was for this purpose a large chest or "treasury" which was emptied from time to time.

On one occasion the Lord Jesus is sitting over against this treasury and He sees how that many people are casting their offerings into it. The rich and prominent Jews throw in much. They can afford to do so. The money rattles loudly and maybe the rich ones hoped that all would hear it too.

But look, here comes a poor woman. She is a widow, so she no longer has a husband who works for her and earns her keep. This woman also throws some money into the treasury. It is but two mites.

Perhaps some of the rich ones who saw this may have smiled sarcastically. What a small offering! Just two mites. Those two mites were together worth less than half a penny. And just look what they gave. They cast in much.

But the Lord Jesus who has been watching all this, takes the widow's part. He knows what those two miserable mites meant to her. He knows that she has given everything that she possessed. She now has nothing left.

"Verily," says the Saviour "I say unto you that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury: for they all did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."

There is a lesson for you here too, boys and girls. How much do you value the services of God's house? Alas, it is often very little that is offered. Those who really cannot give more have no need to do so, but if the Lord has blessed you richly, so that you really can afford more, and you still put only a copper or two into the collection, then that is cause for shame. Give it serious thought.

John 12 vv. 20-50.

About this time two of the Lord's disciples come to their Master and tell Him that some Greeks have asked to see Him.

Probably these men were Jews who no longer lived in the land of Canaan, but in Greece. It could however also be that they were in fact Greeks who had adopted the Jewish faith. Such people are called "proselytes" in the Bible. These particular men had come to Jerusalem for the passover.

They have heard a lot about Jesus. His fame has penetrated to distant Greece, and now that they are in Jerusalem they want to see their wonder-working Prophet and are anxious to speak to Him. What an honour for the Lord, is it not? The news of His many miracles has come even into Greece then. Even in foreign lands He is spoken of.

But to the great amazement of the dsiciple, Jesus begins to speak about His approaching death. He compares Himself to a grain of wheat which is sown in the earth. The wheat grain disintegrates and dies, but in the very act of doing so it brings forth much fruit. So shall it be also with the Lord Jesus. He was to die,

that His people might live eternally.

Nobody understands what He means.

The Lord Jesus is troubled as He perceives the unbelief of the Jewish people. He is also moved as He contemplates His approaching sufferings. What a humiliation for the Son of God. Despised and rejected. Spurned by His own people.

Look, the Lord Jesus lifts up His eyes towards heaven and prays.

"Father," says He, "glorify thy name."

Suddenly they are all afraid. A voice from heaven answers Him. The multitude does not understand what is said, but the wonderful voice is heard by all. Perhaps some looked upwards to see whence the voice came.

Some of them say "It is thunder!"

But the Lord Jesus answers: "This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes."

The Lord thus tells them that it is a voice which should cause them to acknowledge that He is in truth the Messiah.

And ... do the Jews believe it now? ... No, they do not believe it. Jesus has spoken about His death. But the Jews do not desire such a king. They want a king who will save them from the Romans, but they do not believe in a King who shall die. XXX Whatever next. Perhaps some of them laughed contemptuously. Can you not imagine the mocking smiles on their faces? ... They think to themselves: "He is not the promised Messiah. He is a deceiver."

Not only do the leaders of the Jews reject the Lord Jesus, but so do the ordinary people. Though the Lord has wrought so many miracles, they do not believe in Him. On the contrary, they become angry. Hostile glances are directed towards Him.

The Lord Jesus then departs. John tells us that He "did hide himself from them." Hide Himself? ... Why then? ... Well, they wanted to harm Him. Perhaps they wanted to stone Him, and that is why He departs. Not because He is afraid, but because His time has not yet come. Furthermore He is not to be stoned, but He must die the cursed death on the Cross.

Look, He is leaving the temple for the last time with His disciples. Never again shall He walk within that building.

Through unbelief, He was rejected by the people and by their leaders.