

## THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

### Lesson 74, Chapter 22 Continued 2

When we follow Yeshua's career on earth and especially His Wisdom teachings, we find that just as in the manner our teachers taught us in elementary, High School and college, over time He built-up knowledge in His followers by starting with the simple principles and moving them to the more challenging. From the straightforward to other matters that weren't so black and white, yes or no, do or don't. Matthew chapter 22 stretches us to the point of discomfort with the more nuanced and it only gets tougher as we soon begin chapter 23. In fact, these chapters have caused major heartburn within institutional Christianity especially from the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century onward as much for what Jesus doesn't say as for what He does say.

We hear of Christ talking about resurrection, but He never gives a definition of it let alone any details about it. He leaves whatever it is or what it looks like sort of hanging in the air. Matthew's Gospel chapter 22 verse 23 says that the Sadducees don't believe in resurrection, but goes no further to help us understand what that even meant to them or to the Jews in general, except to use the topic in yet another effort to test Yeshua. Adding in another arcane topic, Levirate marriage (a Law of Moses), the Sadducees want to know if in a family of 7 sons if the oldest marries but dies before his wife produces him a son as an heir, and then in obedience to the Law of Moses the 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest brother marries the widow but no son is produced before he dies and so on through the 7<sup>th</sup> of the brothers, then in the resurrection which of 7 brothers will be the husband of this woman? Christ responds that in the resurrection there will be no marrying. Again, other than for this tantalizing tid-bit, we learn nothing more about the resurrection other than that the Jewish processes and customs of a couple getting married no longer occur. Nor do we learn what the status of an already married and living

couple is at time of the resurrection of the dead.

Then the issue of angels is brought up; and other than saying that the reason there will be no marrying is because the angels don't marry, we learn no more about angels (although the amount of Christian doctrine about angels is enormous, neither Jesus nor the Bible tells us much of anything about them). Next Yeshua says that God the Father is not the God of the dead but of the living, and this in reference to the resurrection in general and the Patriarchs of Israel... Abraham, Isaac and Jacob... in specific. Christianity has never had a consensus on the interpretation and application of this statement.

But now we get into yet another strong statement by Yeshua that is alternately ignored and misstated, or at other times twisted and applied wrongly by various of the Church denominations and branches. That section of chapter 22 begins at verse 33. Open your Bibles to Matthew 22.

### **RE-READ MATTHEW CHAPTER 22:33 - end**

We're told that the crowds were astounded at Jesus's response to the Sadducees. So even though He was having this debate directly with the Temple leadership in the Temple grounds, a lot of people called "the crowds" were within listening distance and paying attention. This meant that how this was all going down, and with the way Christ was able to completely disarm first the Pharisees and now the Sadducees, the news of it would have spread like wildfire inside and outside the walls of Jerusalem. That is the last thing any of the Jewish religious leadership wanted; but it was too late.

As a house keeping matter, there was a typo in earlier published Complete Jewish Bibles in verse 34 that says "when the **Tz'dukim** learned that He had silenced the **Tz'dukim**" (**Tz'dukim** is Hebrew for Sadducees) obviously the first **Tz'dukim** was in error; it should have told us that when the Pharisees learned that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees that such and such happened. This was corrected in later volumes.

So we see how carefully the leaderships of the Temple and the Synagogue... usually these two groups opposed one another... were working in concert to defeat what was now perceived as a common threat to the entire Jewish religious establishment. So verse 35 says that after consulting one another about the matter, it was the Pharisees' turn to try to discredit Yeshua.

We're told that they sent a "lawyer" to confront Him. In Greek the word is **nomikos** and it means an expert in the law. Of course what this was speaking about was not Roman law but rather Jewish religious law. Nearly certainly that had to mean the Law of Moses as opposed to Jewish Law... **Halakhah**, Tradition... which is what the Pharisees more adhered to in the Synagogue. Thus this "lawyer" was a special Pharisee because of His knowledge in an area that the Pharisee leadership was lacking: the Scriptures. Thus whereas some Bible translations say "lawyer" that word is misleading for Western Christians. Rather a better translation would be "an expert in the Torah".

So this Torah expert puts forth a challenging question for Jesus to answer: which of all the **mitzvot** (the commandments, the many rules and laws of Moses) is the most important? To butter Him up a bit, the law expert begins by calling Him (in Greek) **didaskalos**, which means "teacher". Now in modern times we have millions of school teachers so the title doesn't carry a lot of weight. In the Jewish and most other 1st century cultures, it did. Teachers usually had flocks of disciples. They were revered, admired and held up as experts in various fields. In the New Testament "teacher" almost exclusively means a teacher of the Word of God or at least of religious matters. The CJB says Jesus was here called Rabbi; this is doubtful because unlike what so many think, rabbi doesn't mean teacher; it means "master" or "great one" or something like that.

And the question is one that almost every child that has attended Sunday School knows or at least has heard: what is the greatest commandment of God that rises above all others? And Christ's answer is (according to the CJB): **"You are to love Adonai your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength."** There is a second part to this that we'll get to momentarily. The KJV says it in a way that is more known in the broader world of institutional Christianity: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." I have two things to say about this. First: the Greek word that the CJB translates as **Adonai**, and that virtually all other English translations I have consulted translates as Lord, is **kurios**. It is a generic Greek word that is not specifically religious or secular. It means master or lord; lord in the sense of any person who holds status and rank. Christians have a tendency to assign one of the several titles for Jesus or for God the Father as "The Lord". Yet what we must grasp is that the term is less meant as a divine title and more an acknowledgement of that person's or being's status and rank. The term properly used in the Holy Scriptures is to characterize the status and rank of kings, teachers, leaders, aristocrats and of God. Notice here in Matthew when

English translations use the term "The Lord" in interpreting what Jesus said, it can only be applied to God the Father. Christ is certainly not indicating Himself. And yet, ask most any Christian who "The Lord" is and they'll just say (in a generic way) "God" or just as often "Jesus". Thus far in Matthew (and in all the Synoptic Gospels), during the time when Jesus was still living, "The Lord" is ONLY God the Father in Heaven.

I cannot begin to tell you how guilty and ashamed I still feel when I look back on my own life up until nearly the age of 40, about how I marginalized God the Father. For me there were really only 2 persons in the standard Christian Trinity doctrine that had any relevance in my life: Jesus and the Holy Spirit. In fact, while I cannot say that I specifically recall any Pastor or Minister saying out loud that God the Father was a relic meant only for the Jews, while Jesus was now preeminent and only for Christians, the implication of it was so thick and baked-in to every Sunday School lesson and every sermon, that believing anything else would have been totally foreign to me.

When I began to study on my own, and the reality was in black and white on the pages of my New Testament that Christ never held Himself up as above or equal to the Father, and He directed all glory and honor to The Father, praying to His Father, and when we read even the Book of Revelation and see that The Father plays such a leading role, it amazes me how I never noticed it or (even more) why the Church has so misinterpreted this juxtapositioning of the roles and hierarchy of the Father and the Son. Actually I know the answer to this, and I occasionally get some nasty-grams for generalizing, but the truth is that the gentile Church early on knew that to gain separation from the Jews and to redefine the Church of Jesus Christ as a gentiles-only and new religion, they had to marginalize God the Father and re-make Him as the old God... the one the ancient Hebrews worshipped... and make Jesus as the new God... the one Christ followers worshipped. And yes... not every last Christian Church or every last Christian individual believes this way. But by far the bulk do and it is something which the Church leadership that teaches this way needs to repent about, and a great reformation needs to take place because this issue represents the molten core of truth of our understanding of who God is, and even how to go about worshipping Him.

The second thing I want to tell you is that there are all manner of understandings about how to translate and to interpret the part of Christ's statement about how to love God the Father, when it says "with all your heart, soul, and strength". Other

Bible versions might say: "with all your heart, soul, and mind". Still others "with all your heart, soul, and understanding". We won't get into a debate over the precise interpretation because it leads us in the wrong direction. What Yeshua meant by what He said is that we are to love God the Father by our entire lifestyles with total allegiance and devotion. Those 3 attributes that Christ uses as to how we are to love God are meant to represent the entire person... every aspect of our being... however we wish to phrase them. We can't behave one way in Church, another at home, and yet another at our places of work. We can't set God's ethics and morals on the shelf for our business or leisure practices. God's laws and ways apply to every aspect of our lives, at all times. Any time we try to compartmentalize our behaviors according to the circumstance is to compartmentalize our obedience and allegiance to God, no matter how we might attempt to rationalize such a choice.

Especially for Christians watching or listening right now, and those who have not first gone through the TorahClass.com study of the Torah with us before attempting any New Testament teaching, what Yeshua says is simply a quote from Deuteronomy 6:4, which is known among the Hebrews as the Shema. Verse 38 has Yeshua saying (in many translations including the CJB) that this is the greatest and most important commandment. Others says that this is the first and greatest commandment. Those are somewhat less than adequate translations. The KJV has it the most correct.

<sup>KJV</sup> **Matthew 22:38** *This is the first and great commandment.*

Did you catch the difference? The Greek word that is most often translated in our Bibles as "greatest" is ***me-gas*** and it does not mean greatest. Greatest versus great indicate something a bit different if we will think about it. Yeshua calls the commandment in the Shema to love God as the great commandment. In fact, I think that because of the modern Western and English way of thinking and speaking, Great Commandment probably ought to be capitalized to make it a formal title and not merely a description as calling something the greatest, does. Greatest denotes that there are others to consider. For instance, if I say that God the Father is the greatest god, it necessary implies that there are other gods, but He is the greatest among them. But if I say He is the Great God, He stands alone. Yeshua is separating that commandment to love God with all our being, and making it unique and the foundation for everything that follows. But He says, there is another one like it. We need to be so very clear on this as this is a difficult but vitally important understanding that we need to try to work through.

The Greek word is ***homoios***. It means similar; it bears a likeness. It means "same as" but only to a point. It does NOT mean equal. It does NOT mean identical. There cannot be 2 "Great Commands" or the word "great" loses it's meaning. It certainly means there is an important relationship and similarity between the two, and together they represent the foundation of the Hebrew faith. But only one is the Great Command: to love God.

It troubles me that tremendously good scholars and linguistic people will try to pound a word or phrase into fitting a preconceived doctrine, rather than letting it speak for itself or acknowledging that there is more than one possibility. The 2 most popular explanations for the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the two commands (the one that is similar) is that it means second numerically. Or that it means it is equal to. In no way is ***homoios*** meant numerically, like meaning 2<sup>nd</sup> in a sequence. And it does not mean the equivalent.

Mark's version of this story backs-up my position on this. I'll quote to you the KJV interpretation because some liberties were taken in the CJB on what was said. The KJV says:

<sup>KJV</sup> **Mark 12:31** *And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.*

So, says Mark, even though there is the "Great Commandment" of placing loving God uniquely alone on its own level, a similar one to it is loving one's neighbor. And together these two stand apart.

For some time now as we have read about Yeshua's Parables where He says something on the order of: "To what can the Kingdom of Heaven be compared". Or "The Kingdom of Heaven is like". He certainly doesn't mean that His illustration IS a replica of, or equal to, or the same as The Kingdom of Heaven. He means there is an important attribute or illustration that we can use to approximate what the Kingdom of Heaven will be like when it is fully manifest. This statement about something that is similar to (but not equal to) the Great Command is "You are to love your neighbor as yourself", and it is another quote from the Torah... this one from Leviticus 19:18.

So what makes these commands similar? They are both about relationships. The first command is about our relationship with God. The second command is about

our relationship with other humans. The first command gives us the basis and rules of engagement for our relationship with God. The second command gives us the basis and rules of engagement for our relationships with our fellow man. Yet, because the first command is the Great Command, it stands above and pre-empts the second. Our relationship with humans is important; but our relationship with God trumps our relationships with humans.

A very famous (and, for some, troubling) statement Yeshua once made embodies this concept of a definite hierarchy of our relationship with God first, and with humans second.

<sup>CJB</sup> **Luke 14:26** *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father, his mother, his wife, his children, his brothers and his sisters, yes, and his own life besides, he cannot be my talmid."*

This is about relationships. As difficult as this statement is, I think I can help ease the pain that can come from this rather cryptic passage by replacing but one word to help us better interpret its intent: replacing the word Me with the word God. "If anyone comes to God and does not hate his father, his mother, his wife, his children, his brothers and his sisters, yes, and his own life beside, he cannot be God's disciple." Thus Yeshua is speaking from His divine nature perspective as God's agent on earth as opposed to a typical human to human relationship. If no human can come before God, then no human can come before Jesus.

Briefly: as I have previously taught on this passage, the term hate is used in the sense of not having proper loyalty. Love and hate were regularly used political terms even in the KJV Bible era. To love one's king was to be in total faithful allegiance to him. To hate one's king was to NOT be in total faithful allegiance to him; therefore one had divided loyalties. The term hate had nothing to do with emotions such as extreme dislike. Thus while all our loyalty is to be with God, if we are properly faithful then we will obey His commandments. And His commandments teach us not only how to love and follow Him, but also how to love our fellow man as we love ourselves. Thus the connection.

I have heard over and over especially from well-intentioned men that their first obligation is to their family. Among human relationships, that's how it ought to be. But to put that before our relationship with God is not proper loyalty. This is not God's command to us. He unequivocally says that He is our first obligation; obligation to our family is similar but not at the same level. Loving God is the

Great Commandment. Loving our fellow man is second only to loving God. But, together they form the greatest (the most important) of all the commandments that covers all our relationships. Thus as Christ says in Luke 14, be prepared to choose your loyalties. Your family... your fellow man... may demand something from you that is in direct contradiction to what God demands. Your family... or fellow man... may say that you can't have it both ways. Go their way, or go God's way. God says the same thing. What to do? Align with God and let the chips fall where they may with humans, including family. And it may just lead to heartbreak. I pray you are never put into this sort of dilemma.

Verse 40 has Christ saying the intriguing words that all the Torah and the Prophets are dependent upon these two *mitzvot*.

The KJV says: ***On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.***

This passage alone destroys any notion that the Torah and the Prophets are no longer for gentile Christians. And if one says, well He was only talking to Jews so it doesn't apply to me (a gentile), then intellectual honesty demands that not one thing Jesus has said to this point in His ministry has anything to do with Christians or the Church because everything He has taught to this point has been directed to His fellow countrymen. Not even the Sermon on the Mount can be applied to Christianity. In fact, those Bible scholars that do possess intellectual honesty on the matter acknowledge this unsettling reality, and there is a large sector of them that now say that there must be divide between Yeshua's pre and post-Easter teachings. That is, on one side of the divide everything He taught prior to His death and resurrection were meant only for Jews, and on the other side of the divide only what He taught after His resurrection is for the Church. Otherwise, they fully understand that the foundational Church principles that have been at the heart of Christianity for 17 centuries that the Law and the Prophets are dead and gone, replaced by love and grace, and that God the Father is the God of the ancient Jews but Jesus is the God of Church, and that God is done with Israel and has turned all their blessings over to the gentile Church, fall to pieces. I know these are strong words, and I regret that this is likely to cause some offense. But what I'm telling you is biblically true; you have seen it for yourself. These truths are not buried beneath the words of the New Testament; they are right there floating on the surface for all to see.

So what Yeshua is saying is that to love God and to love our fellow man are the 2



foundational pillars upon which every following command and law of God is established. Upon those 2 pillars sit, first, the 10 Commandments; the first basic principles given to Moses, that give us direction on how to love God on the one hand, and on the other how to love our fellow humans. And then upon those 10 basic principles rest all the remaining commands that God gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai (the Hebrew Sages and Rabbis say there are 603 more) that are primarily ritual law, priestly rules, and case examples in the Law of Moses about what it means... what it looks like... the application... for how to obey those 10 basic principles, which themselves are based upon those 2 foundational pillars. In the end, it really isn't all that complicated, is it?

And yet Daniel J. Harrington asks this important question in his commentary on Matthew:

***" Did Jesus's summary mean that His followers could disregard the other 611 precepts of the Torah? At least Matthew didn't take it that way. His claim that on these two commandments "hang the whole Law and Prophets" assumes that the whole Law remains in force (at least in theory)".***

Although other well known biblical scholars have said something similar, I chose his statement as representative of the others because at the same moment that he admits it is simply not deniable that Yeshua is here saying that the entire Torah remains in force for ALL of His followers, Mr. Harrington muddies the waters by including the proviso that "Matthew didn't take it that way". In other words, he takes the words out of Christ's mouth (something Jesus actually said) and turns them instead into merely Matthew's opinion on the matter. Look: either the Gospel of Matthew is the inspired word of God and is true, or it isn't. If all it is, is a journal of Matthew's viewpoints and personal opinions disguised as Christ's words and His actions, it is no better than a modern self-help book. When studying the Bible we always have to allow for a low level of miscopying, misspelling, and the occasional later Christian gloss added (but that can usually be exposed by looking at the oldest of the Greek manuscripts). But those words in Matthew that Mr. Harrington throws suspicion upon fit none of that criteria and Mr. Harrington doesn't claim that it does. You see, his dilemma is that once again, the actual words of the Bible... what Jesus said... interfere with long held Christian doctrine and dogma. And so the question for him and others can at times be: how do we rid ourselves of those pesky passages that speak so plainly for themselves and disrupt the fine new religion that has been created? Easy.

Discredit the Gospel writer as needed, by at times throwing suspicion on his motives. But when we do, we can't at the same time call the Gospel itself inspired of God. We must choose.

Verse 41 opens up a matter that I spoke about at the introduction to today's lesson. We have entered a time when Jesus's teachings and the questions He asks are no longer simple and basic. Nor are they necessarily so easily answered even by the greatest minds...Jewish or Christian.

Yeshua more or less says: Ok, you've been putting these difficult questions before Me, now I have one for you. Whose son is the Messiah? In good traditional Jewish fashion, the religious leaders answer "David's". OK then, says Yeshua, so how is it that David says... and then Yeshua goes on to quote from Psalm 110.

When we recognize an Old Testament quote in the New Testament, it is always best to turn to the source of that quote especially in the Hebrew Bible and not necessarily in the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament) because often it will give us some needed insight. Looking at Psalm 110, the CJB says this:

<sup>CJB</sup> **Psalm 110:1** *A psalm of David: ADONAI says to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."*

The KJV puts the same verse this way:

<sup>KJV</sup> **Psalm 110:1** *<A Psalm of David.> The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*

Not much to argue about here except that the CJB uses Adonai, whereas the KJV and nearly all English versions say Lord. But wait. Here we run into another of those translation matters that when revealed gives us some interesting info. To begin, Psalm 110 is (rightly) designated as a Messianic Psalm by both Judaism and Christianity. So it is understood that much about this Psalm speaks about a future Messiah of Israel. Therefore, according to the Church, we get this strange set of words (like we see in the KJV) that says: "The Lord said unto my Lord". A typo? A miscopying somewhere in the distant past?

Actually the issue is easily remedied. The word that Hebrews say is Adonai and Christianity says is Lord is in fact Yehoveh: God's formal name that He gave to

Moses on Mt. Sinai. Due to a taboo within Judaism against saying or writing God's name, the word "Adonai" has been substituted; but the Church has no such taboo. So why insert the word "Lord" when the original Hebrew (that is available to all to see) clearly says Yehoveh... God the Father's formal name? Because within Christianity the term Lord became reserved mainly for Christ.

So what the opening verse actually says is: "Yehoveh said unto my Lord, sit thou at My right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool". If you look through your English Old Testaments, you may find as many as 10 times that the name Jehovah (the English version of Yehoveh) is used. Yet in the original Hebrew it is written in the Old Testament over 6000 times (this is not disputed, by the way)! 5990 or more of those times, the word is removed and papered over with "lord" in our Bibles in order to drive home a desired impression for Christians. Not the best thing to do for truth seekers.

In verse 43 of Matthew chapter 22 Yeshua says that when David penned those original words of Psalm 110, He was inspired by the spirit. That is, David was writing under God's inspiration about prophetic things. There is no conceivable way that David didn't get it that what he was writing somehow involved a future time. But the topic gets deep, quickly, when Yeshua asks the Pharisees to explain how it is that David could possibly be calling the Messiah (his son), Lord? That is, if the Messiah is truly David's son, then there is no way in the Hebrew or in any Middle Eastern culture that David could refer to his own son as "my Lord". It is the father that is revered and held high in a family. Even the firstborn was completely in submission to the will of his father. So Yeshua implies that it is not possible to suggest that David could have been speaking about his own son when he called him Lord.

We must also understand that how the Pharisees replied would have been the standard answer most any Jew would have given. And, it makes sense as to why.

**CJB 2 Samuel 7:8-16 <sup>8</sup> "Therefore say this to my servant David that this is what ADONAI-Tzva'ot says: 'I took you from the sheep-yards, from following the sheep, to make you chief over my people, over Isra'el. <sup>9</sup> I have been with you wherever you went; I have destroyed all your enemies ahead of you; and I am making your reputation great, like the reputations of the greatest people on earth. <sup>10</sup> I will assign a place to my people Isra'el; I will plant them there, so that they can live in their own place without being**

***disturbed any more. The wicked will no longer oppress them, as they did at the beginning, <sup>11</sup> and as they did from the time I ordered judges to be over my people Isra'el; instead, I will give you rest from all your enemies. "Moreover, ADONAI tells you that ADONAI will make you a house. <sup>12</sup> When your days come to an end and you sleep with your ancestors, I will establish one of your descendants to succeed you, one of your own flesh and blood; and I will set up his rulership. <sup>13</sup> He will build a house for my name, and I will establish his royal throne forever. <sup>14</sup> I will be a father for him, and he will be a son for me. If he does something wrong, I will punish him with a rod and blows, just as everyone gets punished; <sup>15</sup> nevertheless, my grace will not leave him, as I took it away from Sha'ul, whom I removed from before you. <sup>16</sup> Thus your house and your kingdom will be made secure forever before you; your throne will be set up forever."***

Here the Prophet Nathan is bringing God's message to King David that his son will be established on the throne of Israel forever. We know, of course, that King Solomon followed his father David and became a great ruler over Israel; and he built the first Temple. Yet, there are additional things in this passage that cannot possibly be talking about Solomon such as his throne lasting forever...and then the "forever" part is repeated. So from the vantage point of 20 centuries after Yeshua's death and resurrection we can understand that the "forever" part of it is about Yeshua, who indeed was in King David's royal lineage. But who could have understood such a thing until well after Messiah Yeshua departed this earth?

It's not that the Pharisees were wrong; it's just that it only reveals half of the truth. The remainder of the truth is that David's so-called son, the Messiah, is also God's son. Yeshua never says that, though; He just leaves everyone hanging on a thread. His implication is unmistakable; the hoped-for Messiah is far greater than what the Jewish leaders had taught the people to envision. Their vision was of a human warrior-king Messiah, like David, that would come and rescue Israel from Rome. Sure; God's hand would be in it. But not in the sense of the Messiah being divine or eternal.

We should not indict the Jewish leaders or the lay Jews for not being able to put this incredible puzzle together. The mystery of it to those of us, Believers, that have the benefit of hindsight is still so great as to be dumbfounding. And do not think that Yeshua is in any way making some kind of recognizable implication that He, Himself, is this Messiah... Son of David and also Son of God. So as we close this chapter of Matthew, none of the Jewish people or their religious

leaders as yet understood the fullest gravity of who Yeshua really was... of what their Messiah was... not even His own 12 disciples.

We'll open chapter 23 next time.