

# Masterwork of the Messiah

## Expositional Study Of Matthew's Gospel

### *Tricky Questions & Timely Answers: Part 3*

Matthew 22:34-46

Written By

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**D**avid Hume is well-known for his intellectual stance against Christ and the Christian faith. He just couldn't palate a faith founded upon miracles, therefore, he devised clever arguments to undercut the belief in miracles. In his book *On Human Nature and the Understanding*, his anti-Christian bias is as intense as a flame shooting from a furnace:

If we take in our hand any volume: of divinity or school of metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames; For it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.<sup>1</sup>

This is an interesting test for truth, and it sounds so educated, so cognitively air-tight, so intellectually lofty, so final; however, it has one inherent weakness. By definition it is self-defeating, meaning if we apply these same tests to Hume's test for the trustworthiness of the faith in Christ then it fails miserably and logically. Is his statement mathematically and

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<sup>1</sup> David Hume, *On Human Nature And The Understanding* (New York: Collier Books, 1962): 163.

scientifically verifiable? No, it is not; hence it implodes upon itself, leaving the person who arrogantly thought they were basking in the sun of absolute, perfect and pristine reason with a real worldview problem. Christianity, conversely, is not founded up sophistry and illusion, but is based on the ancient record of many witnesses who wrote about what they saw and heard from the person and work of Jesus. It is also grounded on ancient prophecies which are so exact, so powerful, so other-worldly they had to be given by God to man in order validate His holy book to anyone who might like to sift through and consider the plethora of evidences.

Yet, there are always those Hume types who, despite what cognitive and empirical evidences for their faith they come in contact with, will, by default, always opt for clinging and tenaciously holding to their fault-ridden worldview. The Pharisees and the Sadducees are a case in point. Despite outright miracles performed by Jesus in their presence, despite biblical exegesis they could not argue with to prove His identity, they re-treated deeper into their unbelief while advancing more aggressively against Him with the goal of silencing Him. Their two verbal volleys on the temple mount on the Tuesday before Christ was, in fact, crucified by their hands, went down in flames before the One who was and is the Messiah, Jesus. And so it is with false teaching. It crumbles before the truth of God.

By looking at how Jesus dealt with these religious skeptics, we are equipped to know how to handle the same kind of ferocious folks who are intellectually and volitionally aligned against belief in Jesus as THE Savior, THE God, and THE Messiah. The question we have entertained needs to be posed again for our analysis of round three in Matthew 22:34-46:

## How Should We Respond To Opposition Against The Faith? (Matthew 22:34-46)

- *Secure The Fact of Opposition* (Matthew 22:15-17). The fury of the godless world is coming your way so anticipate it.
- *State The Foundation Of The Opposition* (Matthew 18). Depending on whom you are dealing with and the level of their angst against Christ and Christianity, you just might have to point out how their typically self-defeating arguments betray an evil motive.
- *Sharpen The Focus of The Opposition* (Matthew 22:19-22). Put differently, we need to show those who fight against the faith how their arguments chafe against divine truth and reasoning.
- *Sense The Flanking Of The Opposition* (Matthew 22:23-28). Note well: If they cannot minimize or defeat your faith with one type of strategy and approach, they will, like the Devil did with Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4), attempt another line of attack. And, yes, they will do this as they tell you they are the epitome of tolerance. Sure they are.
- *Stabilize Your Footing Against The Opposition* (Matthew 22:29-33). Translated: Don't back down but stand strong and true on God's revelation.

To these five masterful methods we will add two more from our analysis of Christ's running debate with the Pharisees, that group of men who just wouldn't give up their false religion and entrenched skepticism no matter what Jesus said or did.

### Seek The Fracture Of The Opposition (Matthew 22:34-40)

Instead of conceding defeat, the spiritually stubborn Pharisees regrouped and came at Christ with one man instead of a group. Remember what I said about flanking? This is flanking in action. When the group technique didn't prove successful, they opted for a lone questioner. I'd say, prepare yourself accordingly:

<sup>34</sup> But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. <sup>35</sup> One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, ...

Hold it right there. Who do they send? A lawyer. What kind? In Greek he is called a *nomikos* (νομικός), which is derived from *nomos*, or the word denoting Pentateuchal or Mosaic law. By employing this particular word, one we find used only two times in the gospels (here and in Luke 10:25), Matthew gives emphasis to this man's expertise in the Law. Stated more precisely: this man is THE lawyer when it comes to understanding the Torah and its application to all facets of life. He was their big gun with a big question for the supposed, self-proclaimed Messiah from Nazareth. More on that in a moment.

At this juncture, we should pay attention to the lawyer's main motivation. He didn't come to Christ for enlightenment, per se, but to test Him. The Greek for this word is *ekpeirazo* (ἐκπειράζω) and by affixing the preposition to the verb it intensifies the meaning, alerting us to this being a test of all tests. Kittle informs us the test was not friendly because this particular word typically denotes a hostile approach.<sup>2</sup> He ultimately wanted to humiliate Jesus, showing Him to be an intellectual buffoon regarding Torah teaching. And He was the man of the hour because he was, as I said, the Pharisaical gun slinger with many notches in his pistol.

Before we analyze the unnamed lawyer's question and Christ's rapid, righteous response, let me ask you a personal question: Should you be in fear of the lawyer-type who might come against your faith? No. Why not? The author of Hebrews gives us the word of encouragement:

<sup>2</sup> ... fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup> For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart (Hebrews 12).

As we keep our eyes perpetually and daily focused on our personal relationship with Jesus, as perpetually and daily remind ourselves of how He endured hostility and remained in control and became the victor, the same can, and will be, true for us. Go back to Hebrews 2 for even more encouragement:

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<sup>2</sup> Kittle, TDNT, Vol. 6:23.

<sup>18</sup> Because he himself was tested through what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested (Hebrews 2).

Helpful, isn't it? He has been in your shoes. He has felt the flames of adversity and hostility against the faith so He knows how to help you, how to comfort you when you are in a similar situation for His name. Rest in the fact that the same Lord who handled the Pharisees and the Sadducees, will be the same Lord who will stand with you when the tolerance loving unbelievers come after you and your faith in the most despicable and intolerant fashion.

Now, back to the attorney's question.

<sup>36</sup> Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?

His question has to be seen in light of the burning theological debate of the day. The Pharisees argued among themselves whether some laws were more important than others or whether they were all important. According the Alfred Edersheim, some scribes even felt that their Mishnaic laws were heavier and weightier than scriptural ones, and this, by definition, pitted them against Pharisees who held the opposing position.<sup>3</sup> The lawyer already had formulated his answer to the question and his position was firm; however, he wanted to draw Jesus into the rough and tumble debate with the hopes of getting Him on the ropes.

Would Christ get actively engaged in a theological problem of the day? Yes. How about you? Will you be drawn into a thorny, hot-button issue? How did Jesus respond? With class and insight:

<sup>37</sup> And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.

<sup>38</sup> This is the great and <sup>1</sup>foremost commandment. <sup>39</sup> The second is like it, YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.

First, Jesus quoted from the Masoretic text of Israel's Shema (Hebrew for "hear!") from Deuteronomy 6:4-5:

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד׃<sup>4</sup>  
וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ׃<sup>5</sup>  
וּבְכָל-מְאֹדְךָ׃

Every Jew knew this prayer because they all prayed it every morning and every evening. Certainly, the lawyer knew it well, too.

Moving from this text, Jesus then quoted from the Septuagint (viz., LXX), of Leviticus 19:18:

לֹא-תִקֶּם וְלֹא-תִטַּר אֶת-בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ וְאָהַבְתָּ

<sup>3</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *Life And Times Of Jesus The Messiah*, Vol. 2, Book V (Erdman's Publishing: Grand Rapids, 1981), 404.

לְרֵעֵךְ כְּמוֹךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה:

Christ's statement first covered our vertical responsibility toward God, as is denoted in the first five of the Ten Commandments, and then He disclosed our horizontal obligations toward people in general, as denoted in the last five of the big commandments God gave Moses. Combined, these two, in Jesus' mind, covered the essence of the 613 Mosaic laws (248 were positive and 365 were negative) plus the Ten Commandments listed in the Pentateuch. In fact, He went so far to definitively state:

<sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

Everything revealed by God from Genesis to Malachi hung on the importance of these two short spiritual concepts: love God with all you've got and your love your neighbor as much as you love yourself.

Jesus had spoken correctly. God was not, and is not, interested in our love of ritual, rules, and regulation, but in each of us having a vibrant, growing, personal relationship with Him. God wants our undivided devotion. God wants every ounce of our beings submitted to Him with no restrictions. He wants your emotions. He wants everything from your demonstrable love to unfettered ownership and use of the mind He has lovingly given to you, mind which is supposed to be used to learn how to know Him and how to share Him with others.

And if our love of God is on fire, if of our love of God is what drives us each day, if our love consumes us like it does when we first fall in love with our husband or wife to be, then naturally and logically our love for others will follow suit. Put differently, when we love the living God we will love all of those He has given life to. Unfortunately, the Statist attempts to create a utopian society by removing the love of God from the picture so he can build his perfect world with people. It will never work because we are wired to love God first, and this love will naturally translate into an unconditional, inexorable love for all people. It cannot be done the other way around, ever, and be successful.

From this one short exchange the learned lawyer learned the limitations of Pharisaical thinking, thinking in love with ritual, rules, and regulations while relegating a love of God to the proverbial backroom. Christ's response was so powerful it began to shatter the unbelieving shell of this particular skilled and highly educated religious skeptic. We learn this much from Mark's parallel account:

<sup>32</sup> The scribe said to Him, "Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that HE IS ONE, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM; <sup>33</sup> AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO LOVE ONE'S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." <sup>34</sup> When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God ... (Mark 12).

See the fracture in this man's false faith? Because Jesus engaged him with good, sound theology, because Jesus gave Him an argument he couldn't refute, because Jesus taught Him spiritual

truth, the lawyer was slowly moving away from false religion to true religion, from spiritual darkness to spiritual light, from spiritual death to spiritual life. We will have to wait until we get to heaven to see what happened with the rest of his journey, but for now it is enough to learn from how Jesus spoke to this religious, highly trained skeptic. He loved him enough to tell him the truth to and challenge him with that truth to make the right faith decision.

Will you go and do likewise? Will you tell the truth about Jesus, about God and His Word, about the gospel, even if it makes people uncomfortable? Will you lovingly level with them? Will you get down to theological business or dance around the issue at hand? And while you're thinking about your response to these questions, here are a couple more for us to pragmatically consider.

One, do you, as a follower of Jesus, love Him with all you've got, or are you holding back? Maybe you are sidetracked or distracted. Friend, Jesus just doesn't want a small part of your life so you can have fun with the rest of the other parts. No. He wants all the parts, from your job to your marriage, from your sports to your singleness, from what you do with your mind to what you do with your finances. He wants it all devoted lovingly to Him so your relationship with Him can be amazing and so He can work in and through your life to impact the world. So, what about it? Is Jesus the love of your life?

Second, do you really love other people, I mean with the agape, unconditional love of Jesus? Do you show them respect or only show respect to the ones you like? You know, if you truly love God that love will flow into your other relationships like a mighty river, bringing life and refreshment. Take a hard look at your marriage. If love is a commodity in short supply, if anger, foul language, taunting, and the like describe your relationship, then I'm sure a love for God is lacking. If every church you attend as God moves you around the country find you at the center of issues, fights, and problems, you might want to check your love level for God. If you love God, you will love people, if when you love people you will ...

- Bear their burdens, not create burdens.
- Be an encourager, not a discourager (1 Thessalonians 5:11).
- Be selfless, not selfish (Galatians 5:13).
- Speak with wholesome words, not unwholesome ones (Colossians 3:8; 4:6).
- Honor others, instead of dishonoring them (Romans 12:10).
- Be unified , instead of dis-unified (Romans 15:5).
- Admonish when necessary (Romans 15:14).
- Be friendly, not aloof (Romans 16:3-6, 16).

Jesus didn't just give the Torah lawyer a lot to think about. He tapped into our world too. What are you going to do with His message to you is the question.

Whoever this big gun lawyer was, he walked away from Jesus that day knowing, perhaps for the first time in his life, the qualitative difference between head religion and heart religion, between sterile faith and vibrant faith:

Pharisaism, which Christ will openly condemn in chapter 23, was a head religion. You know its evil earmarks:

Outer Over Inner Life	Judgmental & Condemning	Cold & Calculating
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Rigid & Rude	Laws showcased	Rituals up-played
Arrogant, aloof	Exacting	Disrespect For Others
Creates fear	Highly Superstitious	Never satisfied

Christ masterfully fractured his flimsy faith by speaking about heart religion. You, who know God, know it well:

Inner Over Outer Life	Gracious & Accepting	Warm & Loving
Flexible	Love showcased	Rituals down-played
Humble & Personable	Merciful & Forgiving	Respect For Others
Creates Trust	Highly Trustworthy	Satisfied

There just might be a lawyer or two in your life who desperately need you to jump into the debate at hand so they can see their way clear to the cross of Christ. Will you lead them?

With the closing verses of this powerful, penetrating passage, Jesus gives us our seventh method for making a difference in the lives of those who find the gospel objectionable and offensive, and who don't waste any time overtly opposing it.

### Switch The Flanking Of The Opposition (Matthew 22:41-46)

Three times the religious leaders attempted to outflank Jesus in order to silence Him before the people, and three times they walked away licking their theological wounds. While they huddled among themselves after the head lawyer went down hard and also appeared to be moving toward Jesus's position, seeking, I'm sure, to determine their next carnal course of action, Jesus outflanked them by asking them a pointed question. Don't you know they gulped hard when He started in on this question? No doubt.

<sup>41</sup> Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question:

<sup>42</sup> "What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?"

Apologetics are not always defensive. Sometimes they are offensive, as in this case.<sup>4</sup> And please remember in your offensive maneuver with the Word of God, with biblical truth, we are not called to be personally offensive. Christ's polemical approach revolved around another theological questioning swirling around Israel in that day. "Who is the Messiah related to?"

Biblically, the religious leaders knew they only had one viable response:

They said to Him, "The son of David."

In Greek they couldn't even formulate a whole sentence, choosing just to painfully say, "the David" (Τοῦ Δαυίδ). Texts like 2 Samuel 7:13-14; Isaiah 11:1, 10; and Jeremiah 23:5 left no doubt the Messiah would be from the Davidic line. Interesting. The hunters had now become the hunted. They who thought they knew everything there was to know about the Messiah and the

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<sup>4</sup> If you would like to read about the various apologetic methods you can learn, I would suggest you read *Kenneth Boa's Faith Has Its Reasons*.

messianic expectation, were about to have their theological paradigm pulverized with biblical truth from Jesus, the true Son of David (Matthew 1).

Christ kept up His theological assault with another well-trained and well-timed question:

<sup>43</sup> He said to them, "Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying, <sup>44</sup>  
THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, 'SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT  
YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET' ?

He quoted here from Psalm 110, a passage which all learned Jews applied directly to the Messiah. For them, the LORD, Yahweh, the great covenantal God, spoke to the LORD, the Messiah regarding how He would one day vanquish His enemies.

Then, in classical rabbinic style, Jesus harmonized these two prophetic texts with one mind-blowing, worldview challenging, false religion busting question:

<sup>45</sup> If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?"

Yeah, how could the Messiah be the Son of David and also the LORD, the God of David? He could be both if He were the God-man in the flesh, and such was Jesus. And the religious leaders had been arguing with Jesus about taxes, who is married to who in the resurrection, and what is the greatest Mosaic commandment, when they had collectively missed the most important question one could ever pose and understand: Who really is the Messiah? He was, and is, a human descendant of David and the eternal God at the same time ... just as prophesied (Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:1-2). This was a concept they had never thought of, obviously. They looked for two Messiah's while the heavenly Father had only determined to send just One, and now that One stood right before them outflanking them so they either stood condemned or redeemed by His words and teaching.

Unfortunately, their response to His teaching prowess left not with faith but fear:

<sup>46</sup> <sup>a</sup>No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question.

I would be remiss in my role as a shepherd if I didn't ask you: Have you formulated a simple, erroneous view of Jesus, one which doesn't square with biblical revelation? If so, your false view, no matter how ardently you hold to it, will not save you from your sin before a holy God. Only a faith relationship based on the full revelation of Jesus Christ accomplish that in your life. Will you drop your false view and embrace the true view of the person and work of Jesus? Nobody wants to be just "close to the kingdom of God" when the King comes for you. You want to be in the kingdom and that comes by faith in Jesus, the God-man, who came to deal with our sin problem by means of His death and resurrection.

And before we leave this instructional section, I challenge believers to study Christ's tactics well. He posed questions to challenge the lost because He had devised questions. I think more often than not we sit around waiting for the lost to ask us questions, and there is a time and place for this; however, there is also a time when you start posing questions meant to fracture the falsity of godless worldviews so a non-Christian just might be moved toward the

Savior. So, get a pen and a pad and start writing, so you can start memorizing, so you are prepared for your next temple tussle:

- Say, if relativism is true, what are the logical moral outcomes for society and are those good or bad?
- Tell me, why is it more logical to view the anthropic principle as a cosmic accident (and a convenient one at that) and not a sign of a cosmic, complex Designer?
- You said earlier that all religions should just COEXIST for the sake of world peace, but I was just wondering, “Could you give me some viable reasons why this view might possibly be weak in several ways?” “Additionally, I was wondering if you feel we should apply this same reasoning when it comes to diametrically opposed political systems? And, if not, why not?”
- You’ve said it is more logical and reasonable to disbelieve in God, right? Why do you say that? What is more logical and reasonable about your position? What is illogical and unreasonable about belief in a personal God?
- You say that you can’t believe in a God who permits evil, but I was just wondering, “How are you able to define the word evil or are even able to identify it, as a concept, since you don’t believe in God?”
- You said you have a problem with a God who allows evil in the world He created, but I was just wondering, “Are you equally worried about the evil in your own life?”
- You just told me I shouldn’t make value judgments about other religions, that I am being judgmental. Could you tell me how is it that you are not making a value judgment against what I believe where religion is concerned? How is it you are not being unfairly judgmental? Where do you get your lofty viewpoint from which allows you the ability to make these statements without being part of them?
- You’ve made the point that religion is an oppressor and atheism is a liberator. What is your proof that Christianity, as a religion oppresses people? Where in our country is Christianity caring for people and setting them free from all kinds of social evil? What is the proof that atheism is liberating oppressed people in our own land? What does history teach us about how cultural atheism plays out in other countries? Is it an oppressor or a liberator?