Chapter 22 – Study Questions

1. This chapter starts with a parable. How and why does this parable connect with what Jesus has already offered in chapter 21?
   1. Chapter 21 ends with two parables. The first was about the two sons asked by their father to work. Both sin, but the elder repents and ends up doing the will of the father. Then Jesus speaks of the sinners and tax collectors entering heaven before the scribes and Pharisees. The second parable was about the wicked vinedressers. This parable speaks about the failure of many of the Hebrews to obey the Lord through the prophets and then through His Son Himself. In both cases, the Hebrew leadership is chastised (to say the least) because of their failure to recognize the work of God and to understand and follow His Son, Jesus Christ. Chapter 22 begins with another parable that is along the same lines. The parable recounts the Hebrews who are not paying attention to the Lord and are not prepared to receive Christ as the Bridegroom. These parables, however, are not just meant for the Hebrews. They speak to us Orthodox Christians today and emphasize that we also need to heed Word of God (Jesus Christ as Lord and God) and to constantly be preparing to meet Him. This is particularly pertinent since Jesus is about to enter into His Passion.
2. The Pharisees and scribes are out to get Jesus, especially now after His entrance into Jerusalem and what took place in the temple. What is their next attempt to trap Jesus? How does Jesus foil the attempt? What is the importance of what Jesus says?
   1. The next trap is to see if they can entangle Jesus either as being against the Romans or collaborating with the Romans. They do this by asking Jesus if it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar (i.e., the Romans). Jesus asks them for a coin. They give him a denarius, a Roman coin. This is significant in that the Hebrews themselves were using Roman coins, accepting the legitimacy of the currency! Jesus says, “Render therefore to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” Contrary to much popular opinion, this is not the beginning of the separation of church and state. Rather, Jesus is telling us that it is not necessarily unlawful to render to the government what is rightfully due. At the same time, we owe the entirety of our lives to God (remember the petition shortly after the Consecration: *Having prayed for the unity of the faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit, let us commend ourselves and one another* ***and our whole life to Christ our God*…).** These issues are not mutually exclusive. However, they do require reckoning from time to time to ensure that the earthly does not conflict with the heavenly.
3. Who are the Sadducees? How do they try to trap Jesus? What is Jesus’ answer and how is that answer consistent with all the other answers Jesus is giving to the leadership of the Hebrews?
   1. The Sadducees are part of the ruling class and own much of the property on the Temple Mount. They only follow the first five books of the Bible (the Pentateuch), observe the Law strictly, do not follow oral tradition, deny the existence of angels and deny the resurrection of the dead. They try to trap Jesus with their question about a woman who had 7 husbands (all brothers, one dying after the other – and according to the law, once one brother dies, the next brother in line was supposed to marry the widow and raise up children for the dead brother) and asking whose wife would she be in the afterlife. The answer is that they do not know the scripture nor the power of God – because in the heavenly kingdom, people are not given into marriage. The point is that they have no clue about God’s will and are only concerned about earthly understandings of things. This is consistent with the other answers Jesus has given because the Hebrew leadership is looking for answers they can devise. They are not truly seeking the will of God or truly even ***trying*** to understand His ways. In all cases, Jesus’ answers are completely unexpected and confound the leadership.
4. What is the point about the question regarding the greatest commandment of the law?
   1. The point is that everything godly revolves around relationships. First, one must love God completely and second, must love the neighbor as oneself. If these two types of relationships are not met, nothing else that the law or prophets say will be of any meaning. Instead, the law and prophets will be viewed from earthly positions of debate as opposed to giving us a proper understanding of our relationships with God and others.
5. While the Pharisees are trying to gather themselves together after all the set-backs Jesus has put upon them, Jesus opens another question to them, going right at the heart of the matter. Jesus asks “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?” Why is this such an important question? Why are the Pharisees and scribes unable to answer it correctly – with full understanding?
   1. This is an important question because it pushes them to admit that their thinking of the Christ, the Messiah, is from an earthly perspective; that the Christ would bring about freedom from political oppressors and usher in a new earthly kingdom of Judea of some sort. They are not looking at the Christ as a literal Son of God and having the divinity of the Father.
   2. Because they are not able to understand that the Christ is the divine Son of God, they are tripped up by Psalm 110:1 and cannot figure out how David, their focus on the earthly kingdom, seems to speak of two Lords!
6. How do we understand Psalm 110:1 as Jesus quotes it in this chapter?
   1. This Psalm is a prime example of the scriptures telling us the nature of Jesus with regard to the Father. In this Psalm, you can try reading it this way:   
      *David relates, “The Father said to my Lord (the Son – Jesus), ‘Sit at My right hand, Son, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’”* In other words, the first use of the word, “Lord” refers to the Father, and the second use of the word “Lord” refers to the Son as the Father speaks to the Son in front of David.
7. What does this tell us about the understanding of the Hebrew leadership with regard to the “Son of David” relative to the true understanding of “Son of David?”
   1. What this tells us is that the Hebrew leadership think that the Son of David will absolutely be a human (and human only) descendant of King David, who will usher in a new earthly kingdom. They are not taking into account the Divine nature of Jesus’ Sonship to the Father. This is why they cannot understand Psalm 110:1 and why they cannot accept Jesus’ divinity.
8. Why is this issue regarding the “Son of David” so important to St. Matthew?
   1. This is crucial for St. Matthew because his audience is mainly Hebrew (as written at that time) and it is imperative that the Hebrews themselves understand that Jesus is not merely a “good teacher,” “rabbi,” or any such earthly person only. It is imperative that the Hebrews understand the scriptures foretell of the Christ being the Divine Son or God Who is born in the flesh (of the Davidic line).