



Matthew Lesson 30

May 25, 2021

“The *Megillah* of Matthew”

22:15-23:12

Tonight we are continuing in chapter 22. As reported last session, Yeshua is teaching in the Temple on Sunday, Nisan 11, three days before His death on the stake. However, I am going to have to back up a bit. It's very difficult to determine exactly when each day occurs by examining the events in the Gospels and I overlooked a change. What is called “The Parable of the Vineyard” in Matthew 21 and “Taking the Kingdom by Force” in Mark 12 are the same teaching event. We will depend on Mark to tell us what the day is until we reach Matthew 26 which identifies the day.

Mark chapter 11:20-21 tells that Yeshua and His disciples departed Jerusalem in the evening on Sunday and returned the next morning to find the fig tree that He had cursed the day before shriveled up. That was Monday morning. According to Mark's chronology, what is called “The Parable of the Vineyard” in Matthew 21 would have been on Monday. We began Yeshua's Monday activities with Matthew 21:33, “The Parable of the Vineyard” which we taught last session. Monday then continues through the remainder of Matthew 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25.

As our session opens tonight, it is Monday, *Nisan* 12, two days before Yeshua's death. *15 Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might trap Him with a word. 16 And they sent to Him some of their disciples, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that You are honest and teach the way of God in truth. And what others think doesn't concern You, for You do not look at men's appearance” (Matthew 22:15-16 TLV).* Although the Pharisees were not in accord with the Sadducees with regard to theology, they wanted Yeshua eliminated and joined forces with the Sadducees in the effort to trap Yeshua. The Herodians were a sect of the Sadducees, the party made up of high priests, aristocratic families, and merchants—the wealthier elements of the population. This group was for the status quo and did not want anything, not even the Messiah, to change their relationship with Rome. While the Pharisees had no love for Rome, they wanted to get rid of Yeshua because He exposed their hypocrisy. Approaching Yeshua, they used words of flattery as they sought to find some statement, as the verse says: “to trap him with a word,” with which they could accuse Him. The Greek underlying “word” is *logos* which does mean word, but also can mean “embodying an idea.” They wanted to find some statement by Yeshua which either opposed Rome, the ruling power, or opposed some of their basic theology.

17 “Tell us therefore, what do You think? Is it permitted to pay taxes to Caesar, or not” (Matthew 22:17 TLV)? The Greek word underlying “taxes” is *kensos*, translated “tribute.” A tribute is a gift that is intended to show gratitude, respect, or admiration. This was definitely not something that the people of Israel wanted to do; show admiration for Caesar. But in actuality, the *kensos* was a poll tax, a census tax, and by levying a one denarius tax on each person, a census was taken each year. The people hated it. Knowing how much the people hated this tax, Yeshua's questioners wanted to get Him to say something against Rome.

18 *But Yeshua, knowing their wickedness, said, “Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites? 19 Show Me the tax money.” So they brought Him a denarius. 20 And He said to them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?” 21 “Caesar’s,” they said to Him* (Matthew 22:18-21a TLV). Coins were minted under the emperor’s authority. The “denarius” of Yeshua’s day was minted by Tiberius. One side had an image of his face and the other was an engraving of him sitting on his throne in priestly robes. To the Pharisees, this was idolatry, yet they questioned Yeshua about it. That’s why He called them hypocrites. They opposed Rome, but used the very thing they opposed to try and trap Him. The Sadducees did not look at it in the same way and had no problem with this type of idolatry.

21...*Then He said to them, “Give therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” 22 And hearing this, they were amazed. So they left Him and went away* (Matthew 22:21b-22 TLV). In saying “give to Caesar the things that are Caesars,” Yeshua acknowledged Caesar’s right to assess and collect taxes on those in his kingdom. But He was not suggesting that Caesar had total authority either socially or politically. *Sha’ul* taught the same thing, principles that he heard directly from Yeshua: 1 “Let every person submit himself to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist are put in place by God” (Romans 13:1 TLV). *Kefa* said essentially the same thing: 13 “*For the Lord’s sake, submit yourselves to every human authority—whether to a king as supreme, 14 or to governors sent by him for the punishment of those who do evil and the praise of those who do good*” (1 Peter 2:13-14 TLV). While Yeshua acknowledged Caesar’s civil authority, He made a separation between things that were under his authority and G-d’s authority. “Give to G-d, the things that are G-d’s,” that is, obedience to G-d’s laws.

Not succeeding in trapping Yeshua with His words a different group of Sadducees came with another theological question. 23 *On that day, Sadducees (who say there is no resurrection) came to Yeshua and questioned Him, saying, 24 “Teacher, Moses said, ‘If someone dies having no children, his brother as next of kin shall marry his widow and father children for his brother’* (Matthew 22:23-24 TLV). Sadducees who do not believe in the resurrection, another group of hypocrites, questioned Yeshua about the resurrection. Their question was about levirate marriage, a word which comes from the Hebrew *levir* meaning “husband’s brother or brother-in-law.” The practice is described in Deuteronomy 25:5-10 and was a legitimate *Torah* practice. Verse 5 says: 5 “*If brothers dwell together and one of them dies and has no son, the dead man’s wife is not to be married outside to a stranger. Her husband’s brother is to go to her and take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a brother-in-law*” (Deuteronomy 25:5 TLV). It was very important to ADONAI that a man would have sons and thus keep his name alive.

25 *Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died; and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. 26 In the same way also the second, and the third, down to the seventh. 27 Last of all, the woman died. 28 So in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had married her*” (Matthew 22:25-28 TLV). This was not a real question. These Sadducees were displaying their disbelief in the resurrection and attempting to trap Yeshua at the same time. The Sadducees did not believe in the supernatural. They denied the resurrection of the dead (Matthew 22:23) and the existence of angels (Acts 23:8).

29 *But answering, Yeshua said to them, “You’ve gone astray, because you don’t understand the Scriptures or the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry*

nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven” (Matthew 22:29-30 TLV). Yeshua essentially said to them: “the Scriptures never intended that the levirate marriage be taken to such an extreme and you don’t understand the power of G-d who does resurrect the righteous ones. “Yes,” Yeshua said, “there is a resurrection, but there is no marriage in heaven.”

31 But concerning the resurrection of the dead, haven’t you read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 32 ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living!’ 33 When the crowds heard this, they were astounded at His teaching (Matthew 22:31-33 TLV). By saying: “*I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,*” Yeshua quoted Exodus 3:6. ADONAI said that when Israel was in Egypt and all three were dead to this world. But as Yeshua pointed out, they were alive in the resurrection. And Yeshua quoted this verse from *Torah*, Exodus 3:6 to make His point, rather than Isaiah 26:19, Daniel 12:2 or Job 19:26 because the Sadducees only accepted the Five Books of Moses as being authoritative.

34 But the Pharisees, when they heard that Yeshua had silenced the Sadducees, gathered together in one place. 35 And testing Him, one of them, a lawyer, asked, 36 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Torah” (Matthew 22:34-36 TLV). There was an ongoing debate among the Pharisees regarding the importance of *Torah* commands which were described as being either light or heavy and there was not agreement about which was the most important. A lawyer, that is, a *Torah* scholar, craftily put this question to Yeshua hoping to have Him give a controversial answer.

Yeshua’s answer was brilliant. No one would take exception to it or challenge His statement in any way. *37 And He said to him, “You shall love Adonai your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself”* (Matthew 22:37-38 TLV). In answering, Yeshua quoted Deuteronomy 6: 5 “*Love Adonai your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength*” (Deuteronomy 6:5 TLV). This is the confession of the *Shema* which is Deuteronomy 6:4: 4 “*Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one*” (Deuteronomy 6:4 TLV). We make this confession daily as individuals, but collectively when we gather on *Shabbat*. These Pharisees certainly were not going to challenge Yeshua on that statement. The second command comes from Leviticus 19: 18 “*You are not to take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am Adonai*” (Leviticus 19:18 TLV). While this verse specifically refers to “the children of your (Israel’s) people,” verse 34 makes it clear that it extends beyond that: *34 “The outsider dwelling among you should be to you as the native-born among you. You should love him as yourself—for you dwelled as outsiders in the land of Egypt. I am Adonai your God”* (Leviticus 19:34 TLV). We take it even further and refer to all human beings as our neighbor, believing that was ADONAI’s intention.

40 “The entire Torah and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matthew 22:40 TLV). I believe that Yeshua’s meaning was that all of the *Tanakh* is based on love. If we love ADONAI and our neighbor as required by ADONAI, we will not violate any of His *Torah* commands. Conversely, ADONAI’s, Yeshua’s, purpose in giving them to us was because of His love for us.

Yeshua was questioned first by the Pharisees along with a group of Sadducees of the Herodian sect and then by another group of Sadducees. That original group of Pharisees was still in the Temple area and now Yeshua has a question for them. *41 Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Yeshua asked them a question, 42 saying, "What do you think about the Messiah? Whose Son is He?" "David's," they say to Him. 43 "Then how is it," He says to them, "that David by the Ruach calls him 'Lord'?" 44 For he says, 'Adonai said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, until I put Your enemies under Your feet"' (Matthew 22:41-44 TLV). Yeshua has shown openly by His teachings and by His answers to all their questions that He is the *Mashiach*. Now, He brings it out in the open. *1 A psalm of David. Adonai declares to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for Your feet" (Psalm 110:1 TLV). By quoting David in Psalm 110:1, He declares openly that He is David's Lord, the Messiah, sitting at the right hand of the Father.**

*45 If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?" 46 No one was able to answer Him a word. Nor did anyone dare from that day on to question Him any longer" (Matthew 22:45-46 TLV). The logical answer to Yeshua's question "how is He David's son" is that He is David's descendant but also ADONAI's anointed One, the *Mashiach*. The Pharisees got the point. Their questions were over. Now they had to devise a way to kill Yeshua!*

Turning away from the group of Pharisees, Yeshua now addressed the crowd on the Temple mount. *1 Then Yeshua spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, 2 saying, "The Torah scholars and Pharisees sit on the seat of Moses" (Matthew 23:1-2 TLV). The seat of Moses, the symbol of judicial authority in Israel was occupied by the Pharisees at that time. They were the official interpreters of Torah. The following verses show the progression of the development of this truth, which Yeshua recognized. 18 "Judges and officers you are to appoint within all your gates that Adonai your God is giving you, according to your tribes; and they are to judge the people with righteous judgment" (Deuteronomy 16:18 TLV). How this was to work is explained one chapter later. 8 "Suppose a matter arises that is too hard for you to judge—over bloodshed, legal claims or assault—matters of controversy within your gates. Then you should go up to the place Adonai your God chooses, 9 and come to the Levitical kohanim and the judge in charge at that time. And you will inquire, and they will tell you the sentence of judgment. 10 You are to act according to the sentence they tell you from that place Adonai chooses, and take care to do all that they instruct you. 11 You are to act according to the instruction they teach you and the judgment they tell you—you must not turn aside from the sentence they tell you, to the right or to the left. 12 The man who acts presumptuously by not listening to the kohen who stands to serve there before Adonai your God, or to the judge, that man must die. So you are to purge the evil from Israel. 13 Then all the people will hear and be afraid, and not act presumptuously again" (Deuteronomy 17:8-13 TLV). The Pharisees were the majority party and controlled the Sanhedrin and all of the lesser courts in Israel in Yeshua's day. Because Moses was the original judge who sat down to judge in Exodus 18, the judgment seat was named for him. 13 The next day, Moses sat to judge the people, and they stood around Moses from morning till evening (Exodus 18:13 TLV). Following the time in the wilderness, in early days, this judgment took place at the gate of the city. In the 1st century the Great Sanhedrin of 71 judges met daily to make judgments in the Chamber of Hewn Stones in the Temple, but not on festivals or *Shabbat*. There were also lesser Sanhedrins of 23 judges in Israel and in the synagogues, the *Beit Din*, the House of Judgment, had 1-3 leaders who were Pharisees.*

There were also actual physical “seats of Moses” in some of the synagogues. But they were not places of teaching. They were seats of judgment. Yeshua said: 3 “*So whatever they tell you, do and observe. But don’t do what they do; for what they say, they do not do*” (Matthew 23:3 TLV). Yeshua said that they were to abide by the Pharisees’ judgments. “Do” is translated from the Greek *poieó* (poy-eh'-o) which means to make or do. “Observe” is from the Greek *téreó* (tay-reh'-o) meaning to watch over or guard. Yeshua said: “submit to their verdicts because they are in authority to judge but don’t follow their hypocritical examples because they don’t follow what they themselves teach.” They don’t practice what they preach.

4 “*They tie up heavy loads, hard to carry, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves aren’t willing to lift a finger to move them. 5 All their works they do to be noticed by men. They make their tefillin wide and their tzitziyot long*” (Matthew 23:4-5 TLV). In making their decisions, the Pharisees placed heavy burdens on those they ruled against. And they want to be noticed wherever they go. They made the *tefillin* on their foreheads large so that their piety would be noticed when praying. And they made their *tzitziyot*, the four fringes on their garments, long so as to attract attention to them. They wanted to be noticed.

6 *They love the place of honor at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, 7 greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called rabbi by men* (Matthew 23:6-7 TLV). They are always calling attention to themselves by sitting in the most honored seats at feasts and in the synagogues. They love to be greeted in the marketplace and called *rabbi*. Yeshua saw their hearts and told the crowds the truth about them.

These next two verses have been incorrectly interpreted by many. 8 “*But you are not to be called rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. 9 And call no man on earth your father; for One is your Father, who is in heaven. 10 Nor are you to be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Messiah*” (Matthew 23:8-10 TLV). To begin with, we can determine that for Scriptural purposes that *rabbi* does mean teacher. 38 *Yeshua turned around and saw them following. He said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to Him, “Rabbi” (which is translated Teacher), “where are you staying”* (John 1:38 TLV)? *Rabbi* is *rhabbi* in Greek and teacher is *didaskalos*. The problem was not being called *rabbi* or teacher as much as it was what the person being called by that name interpreted it to mean. In the 1st century, there were rabbis who gathered disciples for themselves. They ate together, slept together and were taught by their leader, the great *rabbi*. The schools of Hillel and Shamai were examples of this about a generation before Yeshua. But there were many others who used the title *rabbi* with the purpose of declaring that their interpretation of *Torah* was the correct one. This was the case with the many Pharisaical rabbis for they interpreted *Torah* and declared it correct.

A teacher or leader was sometimes called Father as a title of respect. Yeshua wasn’t saying not to call those who carried the titles correctly by those titles. What He was saying was that the problem was with the heart and the reason for wanting to be called *rabbi*. Yeshua was addressing the crowds about the Pharisees and pointing out to them the Pharisees’ hypocrisy. His point was that leaders were to be humble; that they were to serve in humility, which the Pharisees did not do. There is one *Rabbi* with a capital R, Yeshua, and we who serve under Him are rabbis with a small r. He is the important one; we are His servants. There is one Father, ADONAI, but we are the fathers, small s, of children. There is one Teacher, capital T, and we are teachers, small t, under Him. We are not to make

ourselves more important than we are. But, the hypocritical Pharisees were doing just that, seeking to be noticed by everything which they did.

11 “But the greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted” (Matthew 23:11-12 TLV). We are all called to be servants, leaders as well as congregants. Leaders who exalt themselves will be humbled in the end.

Tonight we leave Yeshua in the Temple on Monday afternoon, *Nisan* 12, three days before His death on the stake for us. *Shalom aleichem!*