

22:15 *Went*- The Greek suggests they went away from Him and held a conference.

*Entangle*- The same word used of how *they* were to be entangled in condemnation (Lk. 21:35; Rom. 11:9). As they treated the Lord, so they were treated. Our attitude to Him is in a way our attitude to ourselves and our eternal destiny.

22:16 *Sent out... their disciples*- The use of *apostello* ["sent out"] and *mathetes* ["disciples"] obviously recalls the use of these words concerning the Lord sending out *His* disciples. Just as the kingdoms of Babylon and Assyria are described in terms of *God's* Kingdom, thus making them anti-Kingdoms of God and their leaders antiChrists, so the Jewish system of the first century was a parody of God's Kingdom as it was exemplified in the Lord and His group of followers.

*With the Herodians*- The Pharisees and Herodians were sworn enemies. Herod was anathema to the Pharisees, who saw him as a false Jew and some kind of antiChrist figure. But a theme of the Lord's judgment and death was that His enemies were united together by a common hatred of Him.

*You are true*- Lk. 20:21 adds that they also said at this point: "You say and teach *rightly*", Gk. *orthos*, from whence 'orthodox'. They were thereby trying to lead Him to make a right wing, conservative answer, namely, that tribute should be given to God and not Caesar. And then the Herodians could legally swoop upon Him and have Him arrested for disloyalty to the empire.

*The way of God*- John the Baptist had attempted to prepare the way or path over which God's glory in Messiah could come to Zion. The only other occurrence of "the way of God" is when we read that Apollos, who knew only John's teaching, had to have "the way of God", i.e. John's message about the way, explained more fully to him (Acts 18:26). It may be that John had been so unworldly that he had not paid tribute to Caesar, or at least, he had been interpreted that way; and so now the Pharisees were commenting that if the Lord truly upheld John's teaching, then what was his answer about paying the tribute money? Because it was perceived, at very least, that John had advocated not paying it.

*Neither do you care for any man*- That was, in a sense, the impression which people took of Jesus. The same words and accusation about His not caring for people are to be found on the lips of the disciples, in the same words (Mk. 4:38 "Don't you care that we perish?"; Martha thought the Lord 'didn't care' that she was serving alone, Lk. 10:40). In reality, it was the hireling who cared not for the sheep (Jn. 10:13 s.w.), and the Lord was the one who cared for them so much that He died for them. That the most caring man of all time and space could be so misunderstood, even by His closest followers, is encouragement to us when we feel so globally misunderstood. We are thereby fellowshipping part of the Lord's sufferings and existential loneliness.

*You do not regard the face of men-* This again was an appeal to Jewish orthodoxy, whereby the righteous Jew was supposed to be obedient to God regardless of what others thought. They were trying to lead the Lord into a position whereby He said 'No' to the question about giving the tribute money. And the Herodians were ready to pounce on Him if He did. We can reconstruct how the Pharisees and Herodians worked together in this; the Pharisees were trying to lead the Lord by a path of theology and logic to a position whereby He denied the need to pay tribute- and then Herod's supporters could pounce on Him. The verisimilitude and internal agreement of the record is again strong encouragement to accept this as the inspired word of God, recording the actual words spoken rather than giving a mere summary or imagination of them from a distance of time and space.

22:17 *Therefore-* If all the flattering things they had said in :16 were indeed true, then what on this basis was His view of the tribute money?

*Is it lawful-* This was purposefully vague, because they didn't clarify whether they meant the law of Moses or that of Rome. This was part of the trap. If the Lord said it was lawful according to Roman law, then they could accuse Him of breaking the law of Moses. If He said it was lawful according to the Law of Moses, and therefore that law must surely be obeyed, then He was breaking the law of Rome. But the Lord majestically rises above the trap, by (as usual) taking the whole issue to a far higher level.

*Tribute-* The word translated "tribute" was used by the Jews for the poll tax of Ex. 30:12-16; the argument was that this should be paid to the temple and not to Gentiles. By pushing the Lord for a yes / no answer, they thought they would force Him into an untenable position. Judas of Galilee had agitated about not paying the tribute money to the Romans (Acts 5:37) and had been executed for this in around AD6, in recent memory. The Lord as always appealed to higher principle- if it has Caesar's image, then give it to him; but what has God's image, your own body, then give it to God. The giving of our entire person to God made paying an annual tax to the temple seem cheap and irrelevant.

22:18 *Perceived their wickedness-* The wickedness could be their hypocrisy, which the Lord goes on to comment upon. But their "wickedness" could refer to their personal sins, and because in that moment the Lord perceived those sins, He thereby perceived their hypocrisy and therefore challenged them about their hypocrisy. He may have been given that perception of their sins by some flash of Divine insight, or it could be that His supreme sensitivity to people led Him to imagine correctly the kind of stuff going on in their secret lives.

*Hypocrites-* In what were they hypocritical in this matter? Perhaps they quietly paid the tribute money? Or perhaps it was because in order to answer the question, the Lord made them bring the coin through the temple courts, thus breaking their own laws- see on 22:19 *Shew me... they brought*. They should've been more concerned about the huge gap between their professions and their practice, rather than focusing upon finding error in another. And so it is to this day- fault finding in others over religious matters typically hides serious hypocrisy, the concern with personal sin is transferred into concern about others' sin. Our sense we ought to be self-examining is converted into an examination of others.

22:19 *Shew me... they brought-* The Pharisees claimed that pagan coinage should not be brought into the temple courts. This is why the coin had to be brought to the Lord. By so doing, the Lord was purposefully provoking the Pharisees; likely the Herodians (:16) brought it, not the Pharisees. In any case, we see yet another powerful evidence that the historical records of the Gospels are true to the very smallest detail.

*The tribute money-* This had the inscription *Tiberius Caesar Divi Augusti Filius Augustus Pontifex Maximus-* “Tiberius Caesar, august son of the divine Augustus, High Priest”. Pedants would've quickly assumed that such blasphemous language and appropriation of titles appropriate to the Lord Jesus would mean that such coinage should not be used, nor should such tribute be paid to any man on this basis. But the Lord saw a bigger picture. He was quite OK with such token behaviours, but the far bigger issue was giving to God our own bodies and lives which bear His image.

*A penny-* The coin bore an image which strict Jews considered blasphemous, denoting Tiberius as son of God, the divine Augustus. The Lord doesn't react to this as they expected – He makes no comment upon the blasphemy. He lets it go, but insists upon a higher principle. ‘If this is what Caesar demands, well give it to him; but give what has the image of God, i.e. yourself, to God’. He didn't say ‘Don't touch the coins, they bear false doctrine, to pay the tax could make it appear you are going along with a blasphemous claim’. Yet some would say that we must avoid touching anything that might appear to be false or lead to a false implication [our endless arguments over Bible versions and words of hymns are all proof of this]. The Lord wasn't like that. He lived life as it is and as it was, and re-focused the attention of men upon that which is essential, and away from the minutiae. Staring each of us in the face is our own body, fashioned in God's image – and thereby the most powerful imperative, to give it over to God. Yet instead God's people preferred to ignore this and argue over the possible implication of giving a coin to Caesar because there was a false message on it. Morally and dialectically the Lord had defeated

His questioners; and yet still they would not see the bigger and altogether more vital picture which He presented them with.

22:21 *Render unto Caesar*- The Jews were looking for immediate deliverance from Caesar. The Lord's parody of a triumphal entry into Jerusalem was designed to show that He was not bringing that kind of a Kingdom, that sort of salvation. By saying that tribute must indeed be rendered to Caesar, He was further dashing their Messianic hopes concerning Him, and further demonstrating that He was not the Messiah they were looking for. Thus He was consciously bringing about a situation whereby His popularity was turned into hatred, because of the whole psychology of dashed expectations making love turn to hate. The accusation that "We found this fellow... forbidding to give tribute to Caesar" (Lk. 23:2) was so utterly untrue.

*The things which are God's*- What bears God's image, which is our whole body and mind (Gen. 1:26), is to be given to God. We have God's superscription written upon us, moreso if we are in Christ (Rev. 3:12; 7:3; 14:1). "It is he that hath made us, and [therefore] we are his" (Ps. 100 RV). We must be His in practice *because* He is our creator. So it is not that we merely believe in creation rather than evolution; more than this, such belief in creation must elicit a life given over to that creator.

The things which are God's are to be 'rendered' to Him. The Greek word means to pay back, to return; even giving our very bodies only giving back what He has given us. The same word had been used recently by the Lord in teaching that we have a huge debt to God which must be 'rendered' or paid back to Him (Mt. 18:25,26,28). We can read the Lord's words here as meaning that concerns about pedantic issues relating to coinage are irrelevant compared to the paramount issue- that we owe God everything. This would explain why the Lord says this after having accused them of being hypocrites, having perceived the sin they were involved with (see on :18). Because we are created in God's image, the structure of our very bodies is an imperative to give ourselves totally to His cause (Mt. 22:19-21). Whatever bears God's image- i.e. our very bodies- must be given to Him. "It is he that hath made us, and [therefore] we are his" (Ps. 100:3 RV). We must be His in practice *because* He is our creator. So it is not that we merely believe in creation rather than evolution; more than this, such belief in creation must elicit a life given over to that creator.

22:22 *Went their way*- The record is making a clear connection back to the use of the same word in the preceding parable, where the Jews "went their way" (:5) having been invited to the banquet, off to their immediate concerns. The Lord had challenged them to give themselves to God, seeing they were made in His image, and stop worrying about petty issues such as the writing on a coin. This challenge was another form of the invitation to the banquet. They

perceived what He was saying- for they "marvelled". Just as the Jews heard the invitation to the banquet. But they went their way- and that way was the way to crucifying the Lord, killing the messenger of God. Going that evil way is thus paralleled with going the way of petty materialism.

Lk. 20:26 concludes that "They could not take hold of His words before the people". The Greek for "take hold" is elsewhere used about the Jews finally taking hold of the Lord in arrest and crucifixion. The Jews are also recorded as not being able to do this physically to Him in public, "before the people". But Luke speaks of the Jews doing these things in relation to "His words". This is Luke's way of saying what John says in so many words- that the Lord Jesus was so identified with His words, which were God's words, that He was "the word made flesh", the living personification of His own words, in whom there was perfect congruence between His essential self and His words.

22:23 *The same day*- Surely added to give the impression of intensity. The Lord came to His death at the point of mental as well as physical exhaustion.

*Came to Him*- Over 100 times we read in the Gospels of various people coming to Jesus- His enemies, the crowds, His disciples, people in need. Each came with their various motivations, agendas and pre-understandings of Him. His invitation to 'come to Him' was to come *in faith*. The repeated repetition of the phrase 'came to Him' is perhaps to invite us to see ourselves likewise as amongst those who 'come to Him' as we read or hear the Gospel record, ensuring that we are truly coming to Him and not merely on a surface level as so many did.

*Which say that there is no resurrection*- The obvious response to a question from such people about the resurrection would be 'But you don't believe in a resurrection!'. Lk. 20:27 says that they *antilego*, spoke against publically, the resurrection. Mark's record adds that they also said that "In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise..." (Mk. 12:23). But the Lord was not so primitive as to point out their obvious untruth. He took their position as they stated it, and worked to demonstrate that even given that position, they were woefully ignorant of Divine truth. Long term, His approach stood a chance of working. If He had simply denounced them as liars and self-contradictory, there was no chance He would've ever contributed towards their possible repentance and change of heart. This approach needs to be take to heart by us. For there are large numbers of believers who seem to think that their service to God involves cruising internet forums or endlessly arguing with their neighbours in order to prove them wrong and self-

contradictory about doctrinal matters. This may give a slight ego rush for a moment, but it is not in fact any real victory. For the victory we seek is not to tie another up in mental knots, but to lead them to repentance, to the Lord Jesus, and to His Kingdom. We also need to note that recently the Lord had resurrected Lazarus, with the result that He appeared to have won over many who had previously supported the Jewish leadership. They were now trying to prove that resurrection doesn't happen. The Lord could've called many witnesses to the resurrection of Lazarus, but instead He takes their argument and works from it.

It has been observed that the Sadducees were generally hedonistic- and this surely was a result of their denial of the future resurrection and judgment. Their belief was that only the Torah was inspired, and it was Israel's duty to live according to it in this life. They were a parade example of the effect of doctrine in practice.

22:24 *Moses said*- Luke: "*Moses wrote* unto us". The Lord picks this up in His answer in :31: "Have you not read that which was *spoken* unto you by *God*". He is telling them that God and not Moses was the ultimate speaker to them; and that the word was not merely *written* but is a living word, actively *speaking* unto them. For all their much vaunted belief in Divine inspiration of the Scriptures, these men had failed to perceive that God was speaking to them personally through the human authors. And that criticism needs to be remembered today by those equally wedded to a declared belief in Divine inspiration of the Bible. It is to be to us a word *spoken* and not a dead letter written on paper.

*If a man die...*- The Lord could have replied that if they read the entire passage in Dt. 25:5-7, they would see that God actually made a concession in this matter; and the whole principle only applied to "brethren dwelling together". A man did not *have to* marry his brother's wife. In any case, as most adult men were married, it would have usually been a case of polygamy. But again, the Lord didn't point out that expositional error, but goes on to develop a far greater and higher principle concerning the nature of His Kingdom, in which such casuistry about marriage will be simply irrelevant. And again, He sets an example to those who have spent their religious lives arguing about divorce and remarriage and fellowship issues. Their arguments could be demonstrated to be expositionally faulty. But the higher principle is that such issues shall be irrelevant in God's Kingdom; and we are to live the essence of the Kingdom life now as far as we can, in spirit at least. The Sadducees made a big deal of the fact that the word translated "raise up seed" is that used generally in the Septuagint for resurrection. Their idea was that resurrection is not of the body but through family life. To die childless was therefore tragic indeed. The same error is made by many today who effectively believe that family life is the ultimate form of spirituality. It is not, and God seeks to build a personal relationship with each of

us, He is the personal God of Abraham, Isaac etc., and we shall experience a personal bodily resurrection at which we shall appear before God stripped of our family, and relate to Him as a single individual.

22:25 *There were with us*- This must have been a most unfortunate family. The Old Testament speaks of the failure to build up a house / family and the death of men in youth as being a curse from God for disobedience (Job 18:19; Ps. 107:38,39). Again, the Lord could have made capital of this- but He didn't. There was no element of personal attack, but rather an appeal to higher principle.

22:27 *The woman*- She would have been judged to be a most unfortunate woman, likely under God's judgment (see on :25). But the Lord doesn't question the very unlikely story nor the contradictions within it- instead He works from what was presented to Him.

22:28 *In the resurrection*- The other records add "When they shall rise from the dead". The Lord could've pointed out that they were well known for denying / speaking against the resurrection. But He doesn't make that obvious point, instead focusing on the higher principles rather than point scoring.

22:29 *You err*- The same word used by the Lord in describing how He as the good shepherd was searching for the sheep of Israel who had "gone astray" (18:12,13). Exactly because He was searching for them with a view to saving them, He did not indulge in point scoring or exposing the numerous errors in their claims. The fact the Lord even tried with these types is a huge inspiration to us all to never give up with any group of people.

*Not knowing*- Time and again the Lord assaults their pride in knowing the text of Scripture. "Have you *never* read" is commonly on His lips. We can read, and yet never really read; know, but never know. Familiarity with Bible phrases is simply not the same as understanding them correctly.

*The Scriptures... the power of God*- The two are paralleled, with every relevance for the Sadducees who denied the Old Testament's inspiration apart from the Torah. Likewise in their

audience the Lord pointed out that David in the Psalms spoke “in Spirit” (:43)- the Psalms were inspired as much as the Torah.

22:30 Luke adds that the Lord first said that “the children of this world marry...”. The Sadducees were assuming that the Kingdom of God would be a kind of continuation of this present life, just with eternity of nature. Whilst there are similarities and aspects of continuity between who we are and who we shall eternally be, we are mistaken in imagining the future Kingdom of God as some kind of ideal earthly situation, a tropical paradise holiday, which shall last eternally. This is the same mistake as thinking that we shall eternally be doing what “the children of *this* world” currently do. Instead of criticizing and exposing the faults in the argument presented, the Lord makes the point that the Kingdom of God will not be about marriage nor about casuistic arguments about the definition of marriage- the very arguments which have occupied the minds of far too many of His children. Paul uses the same logic in reasoning that arguments about food are irrelevant because the Kingdom of God will not be about such behaviour, but about love, peace and joy (Rom. 14:17). Paul, like the Lord here, could have exposed the fallacies of exposition being engaged with, but instead reasons on a higher level- that seeing we shall not be arguing about such things eternally, let us not do it now.

*In the resurrection-* Why does the Lord speak of the Kingdom of God as “the resurrection”? Perhaps it is to pave the way for His teaching that “all live unto Him”, in the sense that here He is likewise raising the idea that time will have a different dimension then. The joy and freshness of resurrection will last eternally. The Kingdom will be as it were an eternal moment of resurrection, an eternal now, with no fading thrill but an “everlasting joy upon [our] heads” that will not fade and morph with familiarity and the passage of time.

*Neither marry nor are given in marriage-* Note the present tenses. They are more striking in Lk. 20:36: “Neither *can they die*... they *are* equal unto the Angels: and *are* the children of God, being the children of the resurrection”. Greek tenses, unlike Hebrew tenses, are precise. We would expect ‘They shall not die... shall be equal... shall be...’. But the present tenses are striking. The Lord is building up to His point that the question about marriage is inappropriate because God is outside of our kind of time; He sees the believers in Him as even now immortal, a point made more strongly in John’s Gospel. This is not the same as having an immortal soul, nor does it imply conscious survival of death. Rather is it a reflection of how God from His perspective outside of time sees His children. Jn. 3:3-5 makes the same point, that we are born again of water and spirit even in this life, and thereby are living the life eternal. But that is from God’s standpoint outside of time as we experience it. Lk. 20:37 says that Moses “calls” [present tense] God “the God of Abraham...”. Not only does this imply a living word which speaks to us



today, but again the point is made throughout the passage that God is outside of time. This choice of tenses in this passage is purposeful, for elsewhere we read of how Moses said or commanded things in the past tense (e.g. Mt. 8:4 “things which Moses commanded”, “Moses wrote”, Lk. 20:28; “Moses gave you...”, Jn. 6:32).

*As the Angels-* The Sadducees denied their existence (Acts 23:8). The Lord’s teaching that Angels do not marry was surely additionally an attack on the Jewish myths becoming popular at the time concerning the supposed marriage of Heavenly Angels with the daughters of men in Gen. 6. These myths are deconstructed in Jude and 2 Peter, but the Lord here is also correcting them. We marvel at how apparently ‘off the cuff’ He could speak in such a multi-faceted and profound way, addressing various issues simultaneously. Although His intellectual and spiritual ability was doubtless capable of such instant responses, I prefer to imagine the Lord reflecting deeply upon God’s word and preparing His ideas throughout the years of spiritual mindedness that preceded His ministry.

Lk. 20:36 adds that we shall be as “the children of God”, thereby answering the Sadducees idea that it is a human duty to have children and thereby continue the race, for therein do we have our ‘resurrection’. Again the Lord is lifting the whole question to a far higher level.

22:31 *Have you not read-* Of course they had, but the Lord is yet again making the point that we can read Scripture many times but not really read it as intended.

*Spoken unto you-* Mk. 12:26 records the Lord saying: “...God spoke unto [Moses], saying”. Surely the Lord said something like ‘He spoke unto Moses, unto you, saying...’. What was spoken to Moses was spoken to them personally, just as the living word speaks to every generation. The Lord was equating each secular Jew with none less than Moses himself. This was unthinkable blasphemy in Judaistic thought, to see oneself as receiving God’s words, having God reveal Himself directly to us, just as He did to Moses. God of course had wanted to reveal Himself like this to Israel, but they asked not to hear His voice directly, wanting Moses as a mediator. But the Lord says that now, through the medium of God’s word, the voice of God comes directly to us too. In the new Israel and the new Judaism of the new covenant, in this sense we are each as Moses.

Luke adds: “That the dead are raised even Moses showed...”. Sadducees believed only in Moses’ writings, and denied the resurrection. The Lord takes that position and runs with it, instead of trying to assert the inspiration of the rest of the Old Testament.

22:32 *I am the God of Abraham*- If the Lord was looking merely for a reference to God being the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, He had many places He could have quoted from. I suggest He chose Ex. 3:6 partly to show that the supremely intimate, personal revelation of God to Moses was just the same now to all individuals within Israel. It was a living word spoken to them personally. But also because the Lord wants to make the point that God is outside of time- and that passage goes on to climax in the revelation of that same God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as the “I am that I am” (Ex. 3:14). The God outside of time, witnessed by the way the tetragramaton somehow straddles past, present and future tenses, therefore sees the dead as alive “unto Him”. The question put to the Lord was very much rooted in the assumption that time as we now know it is going to continue in the Kingdom of God, and the Lord is making the point that this is an immature way of looking at it; and therefore the question was irrelevant. The Exodus 3 passage also contains repeated assurance that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will receive what God has promised- which requires bodily resurrection for them. We need to ever remember that the Lord was not merely demonstrating intellectual prowess in all this reasoning and allusion. He considered them as the sheep who erred / were astray, and through all His teaching here He was merely seeking to steer them to Him and ultimate salvation.

*Not the God of the dead but of the living*- This Greek construction could mean ‘Not only the God of the dead, but also of the living’. But the context is the Lord demonstrating that the understanding of the Sadducees was very much a dead religion and their God was effectively dead. They denied the resurrection and considered that we have reward only in this life. In this case, God was the God of Abraham only in the past. The Greek phrase could literally mean ‘Not the God the dead, but the living [God]’, alluding to the well known phrase “the living God”. If God only acted for Abraham etc. in the past, then the God Abraham knew effectively died when Abraham died. But the living God seeks to impart life to the faithful.

Lk. 20:38 adds: “For all live unto Him”. The Lord is critiquing their division between this life and the life to come- by saying that the faithful live on now in God’s memory as they will eternally; He speaks of things which are not as though they are (Rom. 4:17), and in this sense whether we live or die we are the Lord’s (Rom. 14:8). Although the soul is mortal, the spirit returns to God and will be eternally “saved” at the last day. And the spirit refers to who a man essentially is, his thinking and character. This is preserved by God in His memory, and in that sense the faithful dead “live” before Him now. John’s Gospel puts this in so many words by

saying that we can live the eternal life right now. Whilst bodily resurrection is so significant from our point of view, the God who is outside of our kind of time sees the dead as effectively living as He extends forwards into eternity from the present- in a way we cannot now do. I made the point above that recently the Lord had resurrected Lazarus, with the result that He appeared to have won over many who had previously supported the Jewish leadership. They were now trying to prove that resurrection doesn't happen. The Lord at that time had emphasized that the resurrection of Lazarus was a visual reminder of the new life which those who believed in Him could experience right now: "Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" (Jn. 11:26). Luke's comment that "all live unto Him" is saying roughly the same thing. If our spirit is focused upon living and thinking the Kingdom life now, then this spirit is preserved by God upon death. And it is this which God sees after our death, and the sense in which we live unto Him.

22:33 *When the multitude heard this*- Our debates with others are often not so much in order to convert them, but the listening audience and onlookers. And the Lord was ever aware of this. See on :42.

*Astonished*- Yet for all this, it was "the multitude" who were soon shouting for His blood. Mere intellectual persuasion of the truth of theology is no guarantee that a person is truly with the Lord.

22:34 *Gathered together*- The idea could be that the Pharisees and Sadducees, traditionally opposed to each other, were united together in their desire to again try to entangle the Lord. This unity of opposed persons and groups against Christ is a theme of the records. Just as He unites people together around Him, so He unites people against Him- thus creating the Biblical picture of how we are either in God's people or in the group actively against them. This division will come to its final term in the latter day tribulation before the Lord's return.

22:35 *Tempting Him*- Again we see the Lord's temptations being at the hand of the Jewish religious leaders, strengthening the case for thinking that the 'adversary' of the wilderness temptations was likewise somehow connected to the same group or thinking. *Peirazo* can mean both to test, and also to tempt to sin in a moral sense. If in the latter sense, we must ask in what the Lord was tempted to sin? Perhaps in exasperation, inappropriate anger, or to a giving up of effort with the Israel for whom He was dying.

22:36 *Which...* - It is often claimed that this means ‘Which type of commandment?’. But the Lord’s answer suggests that He saw it as meaning ‘Which specific commandment’. Mk. 12:28 records them asking which is the greatest commandment “of all”, which requires that they wanted Him to name one specific one. Again, the Lord lifted the question to a higher level, quoting two commandments and speaking of them as one single commandment; and demonstrating that the unity of God is a command rather than a mere piece of fundamental but dead theology (see on :37).

22:37 *You shall love the Lord your God-* Mk. 12:29 adds: “The Lord our God is one”. That God is one is a command, an imperative to action. It underlies the whole law and prophets (Mt. 22:40)- it's that fundamental. If there were two Gods, Yahweh would only demand half our energies. Nothing can be given to anything else; for there is nothing else to give to. There's only one God. There can be no idolatry in our lives, because there is only one God (2 Kings 19:18,19). Because "there is none else, thou shalt keep *therefore* his statutes" (Dt. 4:39,40). The Hebrew text of Dt. 6:4 suggests: "The Lord is our God, the Lord is one", thereby linking Yahweh's unity with His being our God, the sole Lord and unrivalled Master of His people. It also links the first principle of the unity of God with that of the covenant to Abraham; for “I will be their God” was one of the features of the covenant. The one God has only one people; not all religious systems can lead to the one Hope of Israel.

22:38 *The first and great commandment-* They had asked which was the greatest commandment, but the Lord adds that this commandment is not only “great” but also “first”, and we can understand that as meaning first in importance in our lives. He earlier had talked about seeking *first* [s.w.] God’s Kingdom.

22:39 *The second is like unto it-* The Lord is thus putting two commandments together to form one. Hence Mk. 12:31 records Him concluding, having quoted the two commandments: “There is none other commandment [singular] greater than these [plural]”.

*Love your neighbour as yourself-* This is indeed a challenge; not only to love ourselves, but to relate to our neighbour as to ourselves. It suggests a unique unity between us and our neighbour within the Israel of God. That humanly impossible unity is only achievable by loving the one God. To love God and our brother is all part of the same thing. It is indivisible; the two commandments are in fact one commandment in practice. To claim to love God but not love or even be involved with our brother means, therefore, that we don’t actually love God. John makes this explicit in 1 Jn. 4:1, and much of the Lord’s teaching does likewise. Yet our tendency is to

isolate them, claiming to love God whilst ignoring our brother, and maintaining a strong sense of separation from him.

22:40 *These two commandments*- Again, the Lord makes the point. They wanted *one* commandment isolated as the greatest, and He gave them two, with the further comment that “all the law”, all the others, hung equally upon those two. The spiritual way of life is not a case of isolating one or two commandments and keeping them, but rather living a spirit of life and thinking. Loving God and our neighbour are seamlessly united, although so many try to do one without the other. On the one extreme is the person who sits at home in splendid isolation with their love for God, on the other is the person who thinks that love for neighbour- some neighbours, anyway- is quite enough, and needs no underpinning in a love for God, which involves keeping His commandments.

*All the law and the prophets*- The Lord surely had the Sadducees in view, with the differentiation they made between law and prophets. This would support the suggestion on :34 that they were somehow involved in this ongoing questioning. The achievement of love in practice between brethren, on the basis of their unity with each other elicited by their common connection to the one God, is what the entire Law was aiming at. The 613 commandments of Moses were not, therefore, to be seen as mere tests of obedience. They were designed to produce love and unity in practice.

22:41 *While*- The Lord had clearly done well in answering the questions, and it's easy to misinterpret this as Him now going onto the thrust of an offensive, having successfully parried the attacks. But remember His opening comment, that they 'erred' or were as sheep 'astray'. He was trying to steer them to Him, to repentance and salvation, and not to merely win an intellectual battle for its own sake. All the same, He capitalized upon their continued presence to seek to correct another major misunderstanding. His desire to save them is breathtaking. The fact there were Pharisees who later converted to Christ is proof enough that His strategy worked, at least for some (Acts 15:5). And remember that Saul the Pharisee was living in Jerusalem at the time, and may well have been listening carefully.

22:42 *What do you think*- The use of *dokeo*, to seem or think, may be a hint that Matthew is here combating at least the incipient beginnings of Docetism, the idea that Christ only appeared to be whoever He was, a kind of Divine image cast upon the earth. This came to full term in the theology of the Trinity some time later.

*The Son of David-* They were surely aware that Jesus was a son of David, on both the sides of Mary and Joseph. For they would've done their homework as to His [apparent] family of origin. See on 22:45 *How is He his son.*

Lk. 20:41 records that the Lord addressed a question to the wider audience: "How say they that Christ is David's son?". Having let the Pharisees give the answer, He then asks others how this can be the case. Again, the Lord's dialogues with the Pharisees was not simply to try to convert them, but in order that the audience would learn. See on 22:33 *When the multitude heard this.* Mk. 12:37 concludes the section by observing that "the common people heard Him gladly", so again we see how the records seamlessly complement each other.

22:43 *In Spirit-* See on 22:29 *The Scriptures...*

*Call him Lord-* Judaism's concept of Messiah has always been vague and not commonly agreed, but there was and is the idea that the likes of Abraham, Moses and David are greater than Messiah. The Lord is pointing out that David considered Messiah to be his "Lord", just as Messiah was greater than Abraham (Jn. 8:58).

*Saying-* Another present tense, continuing the Lord's theme of God's word being a living word speaking to us today as if in an eternal present.

22:44 *The Lord said-* Clearly Yahweh. If the Divine Name was to be used in the New Testament, surely this would be the place for it. The fact it is not, when some Hebrew words are used (e.g. 'Sabaoth'), shows clearly enough that the literal usage of the tetragramaton is not something God sees as important or even required.

*Unto my Lord-* Biblically and historically, David's immediate 'Lord' was Saul. Ps. 110 was originally a revelation to David of the potential possible for Saul, who was an anointed 'Messiah' figure. But Saul failed, and so the fulfillment of the prophecy was rescheduled and reapplied to the Lord Jesus.

*Your enemies-* The Lord's enemies stood around Him as He applied this Psalm to Himself.

22:45 *How is He his son?*- The "how" doesn't imply that David's Lord is not his son, but rather is a rhetorical question. How is the Messianic son of David, David's "Lord", to be his son or descendant? Mk. 12:37 says the Lord reinforced the question by asking "*From whence* is He his son?". The answer had to be: 'Through a woman in David's direct line giving birth to Him'. And the questioners were fully aware that Jesus was in the direct line of Mary (see on :42 *The Son of David*).

22:46 *Neither dared any man... ask Him-* These very words are used of how the disciples after the resurrection dared not ask who Jesus was (Jn. 21:12), which is the very context here. The connection is clearly to show that they too through their being too influenced by Jewish thinking found themselves in the same category as the unbelieving Jews- the difference being that they repented of it. Matthew was appealing to Jews to accept Jesus and repent of their willful misunderstanding, and he and John are holding themselves up as a role model, just as we should in our appeals for repentance. The Greek for "questions" isn't in the original; they dared not ask Him again. The implication from the context could be that they dared not ask Him 'Who are You?', for the answer was clear in their consciences. They knew, on one level, that He was Messiah, that He was the heir to the vineyard, whom they knowingly sought to murder.