

Jesus had a target on His back. As He entered the last leg of His three years of ministry, it became very clear to the established religious world that His teachings were a threat to them. His teachings would challenge them to change generations of religious ideas. His teachings would demand they give up things they should not be holding on to – namely: power and influence. And, the Jewish leaders of the day did not like any of those changes. So, they targeted Him. They sought, at every turn, to hit Him with questions and topics (hot topics) that might catch Him off guard and undermine His momentum.

And it wasn't just one group of Jews. It seemed like every sect had their beliefs and ideas. And Jesus' kingdom idea – the rule of God through the church to all men – angered them all! But if they could somehow call his INTEGRITY into question – if they could get him to look less than holy...

So, three separate groups of Jews come at him in **Matthew 22**. Let's look at their approaches.

1. *Herodians* ask about **Money and Government**

- a. Herodians were Jews. But they were supporters of the Roman government. Mainly because Rome supported the Herod kingship and they supported Herod. So, at times they would be at odds with Pharisees (who disliked Rome). But not today!
- b. **(22:15-17)** – So, the Herodians ask about giving money from Rome back to Rome.
- c. Now, this is a double hot button topic.
 - i. Firstly, it has to do with money a person earned. People care about their money.
 - ii. Secondly, it has to do with giving that money to an untrustworthy government.
- d. So, if Jesus is the insurrectionist, troublemaker they hope He is, they anticipate Him saying something like: *"We earned that money. It is ours. And we aren't giving it back!"*
- e. **(22:18-22)** – He didn't say that, did He?
 - i. He said: look at that coin. What does that have to do with Me? From Caesar and back to Caesar. He isn't advocating poverty, but a basic lack of greed.
 - ii. He isn't advocating for all Caesar stands for, but He isn't here to fight the powers and defy the system – He is here to show them their hearts belong to God!

2. *Sadducees* ask about **Marriage and Eternity**

- a. You might remember that Sadducees are "sad you see," because they do not believe in angels nor the resurrection of the day. We might call them: real time spiritualists. They have spiritual ideas about God, but really keep that bound in the here, not hereafter.
- b. **(22:23-28)** – They believe they have constructed the perfect question to show the limitations of Jesus' intellect as well as the limitations of His beliefs.
 - i. Firstly, they use the hot button marriage topic and weave a deep scenario.
 - ii. Secondly, they take it to the afterlife to show perceived weaknesses with Jesus.
- c. So, if Jesus is less than capable, He will delve off into the scenario and lose focus chasing down marriage issues. Or He will have no answer for the question, showing an afterlife can't be what He says it is because it presents a contradiction to the Law.
- d. **(22:29-33)** – He maintains amazing integrity. How does He answer?
 - i. You expose that you don't know the WORD nor GOD. He didn't chase the scenario. He went straight to the point. There is no marriage in heaven.
 - ii. Then He cuts to the real point – they don't believe in the resurrection at all. So He uses known Law language to show that those gone before still live!

3. *Pharisees* asked about **God's Law and Preferences**

- a. The Pharisees are Christ's most notable Jewish enemies. He has to deal with them at every turn. So it is their turn. Much like in the previous two, they kind of sit back and send a spokesman in – in this case a lawyer among them.
- b. **(22:34-35)** – Some argue the man's question is sincere, since the man responds favorably in Mark's gospel: Jesus says he isn't far from the kingdom. But the Pharisees like the question:
 - i. Firstly, it tests if Jesus even knows the Law of God.
 - ii. Secondly, it asks Him to make a preference (which Pharisees did – ranking important laws v. traditions) so as to categorize Jesus or challenge Him.
- c. And, if Jesus wasn't versed in law, He could not have answered. Or if Jesus was like the and picked and chose laws, He might pick one and announce others could be ignored.

- d. (22:37-40) – But instead He shows beautiful knowledge and integrity!
 - i. Want to talk about knowing the Book – I’ll quote the book! I won’t pick one of the 10 commandments (Deut 5). I’ll show you when Moses summed it up in chapter 6 with the one that ties all those together – Just love and honor God!
 - ii. He even threw in a second one, which when bound together with the first represented all 10 commandments and the 600 after it! No Partiality in Law!

How great is Jesus? His integrity is above questioning, scenarios and hot button topics.

Question: Is Yours? We are Jesus’ followers. We are attacked and questioned and doubted and disregarded by so many in the world. They, from the carnal minded like the Herodians, to the spiritually limited like the Sadducees, to the false teachers like the Pharisees, are looking for chinks in our armor, signs of fallen integrity they can use to set us aside as irrelevant. Are we holding up?

How about a little (6 Topic Test) to see how we are doing? We can look at both word and action.

Maybe our detractors will ask us about such issues. But more likely they will watch and listen.

1. **What is your relationship with your money? (I Timothy 6:17-19)**
 - a. Is life all about money? Do you love it? Do you get angry about it being taken or required? Are you constantly enamored by ways to get more or keep it close?
 - b. OR - Do you live for something greater? Are you showing that by a willingness to give it away? Do you see the face on it and say, “that’s not Jesus. This isn’t that big a deal.”
2. **How do you deal with a worldly government? (Romans 13:1,4-7)**
 - a. Do you verbally bash and deride them? Do you make it out to be a war worth fighting every day? Do you argue and fight about taxes and requirements.
 - b. OR - Do you dislike government but still uphold the law willingly? Do you pay your taxes and own your responsibility? Do you make such things a small part of who you are? Do you pray?
3. **What is your position on marriage and divorce? (Matthew 19:4-9)**
 - a. Do you not know the passages on Christ’s law? Do you let cultural choices change the game? Do you find some marriage questions too difficult and beyond your ability to answer?
 - b. OR – Do you read and study the topic? Do you cut through scenarios and emotions and stand by what the Bible has taught? Do you sympathize with people but still stand for the Truth?
4. **How do you think about and talk about Eternity? (I Thess. 4:16-18; II Thess. 1:7-9)**
 - a. Do you question what you can’t explain? Do you shy from mentioning it or talking about it because you don’t have confidence in it? Do you feel like others could push you further from believing?
 - b. OR – Do you know what the Bible says about a living God and living patriarchs and the living soul? Do you know and believe what is coming, what it will sound and look like? And will you speak of it?
5. **What about your knowledge of the Law of God? (II Timothy 2:14-19)**
 - a. Do you have a working knowledge of the Scriptures? If someone asks you about God’s will on a moral topic, would you have little idea where to go? Are you working on bits and pieces?
 - b. OR... Are you daily growing more comfortable with the text? Are you becoming ever more familiar and able to call to mind the passages and themes that people may ask about?
6. **How do you explain Preferences in following Christ’s law? (James 2:8-12)**
 - a. So many people pick and choose and rank and prioritize the law. Do you do that? Do we put weightier matters to worship and lesser to practice? Do we have favorite laws or bigger ones?
 - b. OR... Do we follow all of Christ’s law the same? Do we credit the greatest commandment as the love and honoring of God? The second our neighbor? And know how to share **Matthew 28:18-20**?

Those can be some tough topics, right? And staying mentally focused and keeping your integrity in those areas can be a real chore? And if people are picking at you about them to make an argument that can add even greater stress. You might even want to give up sometimes on holding the line. Don’t.

Remember in Whom we trust! Listen to Jesus’ response to them. Our King! (22:41-46).

Jesus turns it around and says: “I am Lord!” I am over David and Death and I will Rule.

Jesus had proven this with His Miracles, Wisdom and would further with Resurrection and Ascension.

When integrity is the toughest. When study on challenging life issues feels weighty...

Remember whom you trust – Jesus, the Lord over man, death, eternity. He is above reproach. He lived with integrity and knowledge, and we can too. In His footsteps, until death... and beyond. Is it time to stand up?