

THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

The King's Commission: A Study of Matthew 21–28

STUDY SIX

The Two Ultimate Questions

Matthew 22:34–46

In this passage, Jesus begins by giving an answer that the lawyer could not question and ends with a question the lawyer could not answer.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

BEING the wisest of all teachers, Jesus pointed His questions to the hearts of His hearers. He wanted people to think deeply, search their souls, and, eventually, arrive at life-transforming decisions. His questions were like guides leading His listeners to the gates of the kingdom of God where all they must do to enter was take a single step of faith in Him.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* study's passage, Jesus first masterfully answered the question of a legal expert who was testing Him on a matter of Mosaic law. But then, He turned the tables and asked His own questions.

A preacher in the early church, John Chrysostom, recognized the magnitude of what Jesus was asking: “[Jesus] asks these questions, secretly leading them on to confess Him also to be God.”¹ Jesus' questions at that time do the same work of urging us to make the same confession of faith in our own time. Let's look closer at His questions and their transformative power in the lives of all who sincerely and seriously consider them.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

The Two Ultimate Questions

Matthew 22:34–46



PREPARE YOUR HEART

As you open the Word, open your heart in prayer.

Father, I receive Jesus' questions as gifts of grace. Use them to pierce the armor of my doubts and release my faith in Your Son as my Savior and Lord, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The dialogue in [Matthew 22:34–46](#) represents the religious leaders' final attempt to expose Jesus as a false messiah. With the Sadducees in retreat after their failed attack on Jesus in 22:23–40, the Pharisees mounted one last offensive—this time staking their hopes on an “expert in religious law” and his cleverly devised question (Matthew 22:35).



Observation: The Greatest Commandment and the Divine Son

Observation is the first step in Bible study because it lays the groundwork for the steps that follow: interpretation, correlation, and application.² Observe the passage by mulling over each word and phrase in the text while you answer the following questions. Look for thematic and logical connections you haven't seen before.

Why did the Pharisees want to attack Jesus again, and what did the “expert” ask Jesus in [Matthew 22:34–36](#)?

The questioner was a *nomikos*, a “man of the law” who was “extremely knowledgeable” in the Hebrew Scriptures and “would be called upon to explain and apply the Law.”³ Asking Jesus to pick the greatest commandment in the Torah was like shoving Him into an ongoing intellectual street fight. Rabbinic schools fought each on questions like these to establish dominance.



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Until Jesus, no rabbi had prevailed over the others in this legalese scrap. What did Jesus say, according to [Matthew 22:37–40](#), and what aspects made His answer so exceptional? For background, read the verses that Jesus quoted in their context: [Deuteronomy 6:4–9](#) and [Leviticus 19:11–19](#).

Now it was Jesus' turn to test the Pharisees. With what "simple" question did Jesus begin, according to [Matthew 22:41–42](#), and how did the Pharisees answer? By asking this question, Jesus was opening the door to what vitally important subject?

Then Jesus quoted a verse from the messianic Psalm 110 and presented a kind of riddle to the Pharisees. What were His questions in [Matthew 22:43–46](#)? Try to put the riddle in your own words?

Jesus had "silenced the Sadducees." (The Greek word for *silenced* means "muzzled," Matthew 22:34.) Now He shut the mouths of these lions and put an end to all future verbal stalking. "No one could answer him. And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions" (22:46).



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Interpretation: The Meaning of “My Lord”

The Hebrew Scriptures promised that God would raise up a descendent of David to sit on an everlasting throne and bring peace to the world (2 Samuel 7:12; Isaiah 9:6–7). David's divinely inspired homage to his future son as “my Lord” in Psalm 110:1 formed the basis of Jesus' question, “Since David called the Messiah ‘my Lord,’ how can the Messiah be his son?” (Matthew 22:45).⁴

What truth about the identity of the Messiah did Jesus try to teach the Pharisees? For help, read page 185 in Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Insights on Matthew 16–28*. For an online resource, consult *Constable's Notes* at netbible.org.

At Jesus' triumphal entry, the people acclaimed Jesus as “the Son of David!” (21:9). Children in the temple sang the same tune (21:15). The Pharisees must have been deaf not to hear these shouts and songs. So Jesus then invited the Pharisees to join their voices to the chorus and take the next steps. *Believe in the Son of David as the Son of God and give homage to Him as your Lord.*

Why couldn't the Pharisees answer Jesus' question in 22:45?

The Pharisees couldn't answer because they wouldn't allow the truth to sink in. They would rather follow the dictates of their carnal lives than surrender their souls to the only One who could transform them from darkness to light. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: The Lawyer's Open Heart

Mark's account recorded the legal expert's response to Jesus that Matthew omitted. Read [Mark 12:28–34](#). How did the teacher of religious law respond to Jesus, and what important truth did the man add that revealed His understanding according to [12:32–33](#)?

Mark followed up with Jesus' response: "Realizing how much the man understood, Jesus said to him, 'You are not far from the Kingdom of God'" (Mark 12:34). What quality do you think Jesus perceived in this man's heart? What next step should this man have taken to enter the kingdom of God?

The other Pharisees locked their hearts behind iron bars of pride and hypocrisy. This expert in the law, however, demonstrated genuine devotion to God and compassion for others. He understood what Christ had taught earlier to "show mercy, not offer sacrifices" (Matthew 9:13), and, perhaps, he went on take that final step and believe in Jesus. Does this man's example give you hope for unbelievers in your life who may also be "not far from the Kingdom of God" (Mark 12:34)? If so, how?



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Jesus said to love God and love others. I think of the cross. The vertical post represents loving God and the horizontal beam, loving others. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Loving God, Loving Others

As Jesus taught, the greatest command is to love God, and the second command, being equally as great, is to love others. On these two pegs, all the commands and prophecies of Scripture hang. And on the bedrock of these principles, we build our lives.

Pastor Chuck Swindoll explains how loving God and loving others go hand-in-hand:

The Bible's message is . . . to turn your attention toward the only One who is worthy of ultimate love and adoration and worship. And once that . . . begins to take shape, it's amazing what it does to our relationship with others. We find it easier to love others when we love God.⁵

In what ways have you found Pastor Chuck's statement to be true in your life?

How can you put into practice the principles of loving God and others this week? Try to come up with realistic ideas. What might "loving God" look like on your commute to work or during your daily chores? What might "loving others" look like in normal conversations and casual interactions?



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Now put these ideas into action! Before closing this study, though, take a few worshipful moments to echo David's prophetic praise of Jesus as "my Lord." Declare it aloud in prayer. Give thanks that Jesus has ushered you through the gates of His kingdom and you now live securely in His loving care.



A FINAL PRAYER

Dear Father, when I call Your Son "my Lord," I give Him first place in my heart. As He once ascended to Your right hand in heaven, He has ascended to the pinnacle of my dearest affections. As He sits on the throne of heaven, He sits on the throne of my heart. He is over all creation and all that's good, and I give Him my all for now and always. In His name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. As quoted by Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on Matthew 16–28*, vol. 1B (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2020), 184.
2. Learn more about Pastor Chuck's *Searching the Scriptures* method on the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)" at insight.org.
3. Swindoll, *Insights on Matthew 16–28*, 182.
4. "The New Testament contains more references to this psalm than to any other chapter in the Old Testament." Thomas Constable, "Psalm 110" introduction, *Constable's Notes*, netbible.org.
5. Taken from Charles R. Swindoll, transcript of the sermon, "The Two Ultimate Questions."

