

## Growth Group Study - Fearless Faith

### Bible reading, Matthew 22:15–46 - John Malcolm - 14 7 2019

(Note: because we are skimming over a number of tense encounters between Jesus and the temple authorities, you may wish to split this study over two meetings)

#### Did you take any interest in the boxing career of Mohamad Ali?

What did you like/dislike about his attitude and approach to his bouts?

Where you impressed with his poetry? (*float like a butterfly, sting like a bee. The hands can't hit what the eyes can't see*).

What attributes do you think helped him to excel as a champion boxer?

#### In our reading Jesus is in a spiritual heavyweight contest with the Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians. (Information below).

What do you know about each of these groups and why would they be interested in challenging Jesus, even discrediting him if they could?

These groups were often at odds with each other, why do you think they united in opposition to Jesus?

What is significant about the location where this contest takes place?

What do you think gave Jesus strength and made him fearless in the face of such opposition?

#### Read Genesis 1.26-27 & Matthew 22.15-22

Why did the Pharisees and Herodians chose to question Jesus on the matter of paying tax?

What did this matter one way of the other?

How might this help our attitude to paying taxes?

What is the significance of Caesar's image on the coin?

What image from the creation story in Genesis is "inscribed" on humanity?

What do you think Jesus meant when he said, *give ... to God what is God's?*

How do we do we give to God what is God's in our lives at home, work and Church?

Do you think the Pharisees and Herodians were giving to God what is God's? (Give reasons for your answer)

**Read Deuteronomy 25. 5-6, Matthew, 22.23-33, 1 Corinthians 6.14 & John 3.16**

What was different between the views of Jesus and the Sadducees regarding life in eternity?

While the law of marrying a deceased brother's wife is foreign to us, how would such an arrangement have provided care for the widow and have been a right women valued?

How did the Sadducees story of the widow of seven brothers appear to make nonsense of the idea of resurrection?

What did Jesus expose as the two faults in this puzzle and how are they relevant?

What do you think is the difference between opinion, interpretation and knowing the scriptures? Which of these do you think most people rely on when engaging in spiritual conversations?

What part does the power of God play in resurrection?

While angels are a side topic in Jesus' conversation if time allows in the study you might like to consider this or study it later on your own. (Note – Jesus was having a dig at the Sadducees because they didn't believe in the existence of angels and their view on this was still another point at which they were in error).

What do you think Jesus meant when he said, *they will be like the angels in heaven*?

Some people mistakenly think in heaven we become angels, but what do we know about the difference between those created beings and humanity? (Psalm 8.4-5 & Heb 2.5-8 & 14-18)

The Sadducees only recognised the first five books of the Old Testament as being God's word given to Moses and thought resurrection could not be proven from these books. Why do you think Jesus reminds them of God calling Moses? (Exodus 3.6)

What was so astonishing about Jesus' answer that it impressed the crowd?

Reflecting on Abraham and others, Hebrew 12.1 speaks of Christians being surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. How does this help shape our view on the "afterlife"?

**Read Matthew 22.34- 40 & Luke 10.29**

Debate over the greatest commandment was a common in Judaism, well known by many, and included in the gospels more than once. It was something akin to how Presbyterians know the answer to the first question in the larger catechism – What is the chief end of Man? Nevertheless, this was still a test in which Jesus having shown the Sadducees to be in error about the scripture, would reveal if he himself was in error about the scripture or if he held to an orthodox view. Not immediately, but soon after (Matt 23.23) Jesus would reveal the Pharisees error of projecting an appearance of loving God, by strictly adhering to the tithe, but failing to love their neighbours, by neglecting matters of justice, mercy and faithfulness.

How are love for God and neighbour related?

Which, if either of these, do you think is easier or less costly?

Why do you think, in Luke's gospel, the man tried to justify himself?

How do we at church, home, work or socially express love for God and neighbour?

**Read Matt 22.41-46**

Why do you think Jesus turns their attention to the identity of the Messiah, what point do you think he is trying to drive home?

Whose son did the Pharisees think the Messiah was and was their answer wrong or incomplete? (Explain your view)

What had the Pharisees overlooked about the relationship between David and the Messiah, and what difference might this have made to their relationship with Jesus?

The minister suggested Jesus had *Messiah* written all over him and his claim to be the Messiah could not have been clearer if he had Messiah tattooed on his forehead.

What difference does it make to us that Jesus thought of himself as the long-awaited Messiah?

Jesus pointed out the Messiah was not simply David's son, but also David's Lord – why could the Pharisees offer no response to this, and no longer dare to ask him any more questions?

**For personal reflection:**

What is the main thing you learn about Jesus from these encounters in the temple?

How might Jesus' fearless faith encourage you to be more fearless?

What difficult spiritual questions have you actually been asked by someone, and how did you answer?