

Main Point: Jesus remakes all of our priorities when he has authority – the government, marriage and the purpose of life.

Call people to submit all of life to Jesus, encourage “close” people and challenge “rebellious” people

It’s all very well to say you think someone is in charge, the point comes when you disagree.

Your commitment to someone’s authority is shown when they say something you don’t want to hear. More likely to make decisions that way: do I agree with what they say?

Last week, Jesus is the son of the Father = he has authority.

Do you agree with me about this? Of course, Jesus claims authority, doesn’t feel the need to justify what he teaches so we’ll agree with him. Takes it on.

3 big issues: Tax, Marriage, Lifestyle

We have to accept what Jesus says because he is God’s son, but what is the world like, where he is in charge.

Tone.

Life not just tax

First question is all about tax. Of course none of us like tax, and really we’re asking bigger question – taxes are used for all sorts of things I don’t agree with – in world where Jesus in charge, what about people who seem to be in charge – government.

Pharisees and Herodians – 2 groups who have been after killing Jesus since chapter 3 of the book. They wouldn’t have agreed about this question.

Ruled by Rome.

Pharisees lived with that because they had to but tried to keep themselves pure from the world. Rejected the existence of the state, couldn’t get rid of it, tried to keep themselves pure from it.

Religious groups that withdraw from the world because morally compromised. Probably not right to pay tax, makes you impure. Don’t vote, all the parties are anti-god.

Christians who listen to Christian music, watch Christian TV, put up with state, stay separate from it. Judgemental with people not Christians, or Christians who don’t keep their rules. Pharisees.

By contrast, Herodians were the collaborators. Worked with puppet king, Herod, to play the system for whatever they could get.

Herodians were the Christians who say – get rid of the offensive bits of the Christian faith to make the state think we’re great. Get government funding if we talk about Jesus less, change Christian morality.

Catch him. In trouble with people or in trouble with Rome.

Picks up a coin with Caesar’s image on it.

“Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s”.

Strange little phrase. Image. Money has Caesar’s image imprinted on it. Belongs to him.

Where is God's image imprinted?

On people. On every person. Jesus is saying, God delegates some things to belong to government, don't get distracted by what belongs to government – purity or collaboration – if you yourself haven't given your life, which bears his image back to him.

Spear me on a political question: co-opt me into your political argument when his call is to you, a person, whoever you are, age, ability, to give yourself, bears God's image to God.

People who try and pull Jesus in to support their party political cause are wrong. He is interested in people coming back to know God, and policy about taxes is secondary to that. Mark of the kingdom he is bringing, that people matter, people coming to know God matters most.

More passionate about a political cause than– people coming to know God – that is out of step with Jesus.

More than that, he is saying that certain areas that God has given state authority that it's right to obey state – give to state what rightly belongs to it. May be no fan of current government, as a Christian I do what I can to obey the state, pay my taxes, obey the law even when uncomfortable.

BUT, not recommending just focus on spiritual things. Believe what Jesus says implications for the real world every day – is it really true that every human life belongs to God and is marked by his image. Honoured every human being with a mark of truly belonging to him? Where human rights comes from.

Political implications Christians will work out differently. Racism wrong.

Some will think breaking law to go to protest is important to do, some will think focus on building inclusive church matters more. God's image. Taxes, you don't get to say: Jesus would be at the protest, or Jesus wouldn't – you personally must give your life to God, must live out that every person is made in God's image.

Pharisees – think I'm not interested in politics really. World happens around me while I read the Bible and attend church. Get angry when Health Secretary cuts my pay – but isn't all this fuss about equality, trans rights, abortion – I don't get involved in it. Might share the Gospel if have a chance, unlikely because don't talk about things people not Christians talking about. If you belong to God (are a Christian) and everyone made in God's image, not good enough.

Herodians – social media timeline full of view on every cause, wouldn't know they were a Christian. Really think can influence government we will bring God's kingdom now. Tend to big up on causes political bedfellows agree with – ignoring abortion ignoring racism. Never sharing the Gospel with friends. Unpopular, and will lose my political voice. If you belong to God and everyone made in God's image is not enough.

Challenges everyone's politics. Real question is – have you given your life, which belongs to God, back to him? If you have, do you treat everyone else as carrying God's image too?

Heaven not just marriage

Next group Sadducees. Basically believed you should live a good life, but didn't believe in life after death. No resurrection. No heaven, no hell, just this life now.

Tended to be rich and do well under the Romans, often the way that they couldn't believe any life except this one, because this one, for them, was so good.

To prove their view they bring up marriage. Tell this story about a very unlucky woman. 7 husbands die. At “the resurrection” whose husband will she be?

Reflect what many people think who don't really believe that there is a new world coming, a new world God is recreating – most important thing is marriage (or in our culture romance?)

As it's so obvious that marriage is the most important thing, that doesn't fit with the idea of the resurrection, the resurrection can't be true.

People find that. Most overwhelming powerful important thing being in love, shape life around that, call of Jesus – shape my life around other people being in God's image, serving them, so I and they get ready to meet Jesus some day – seems wrong.

Mike drop: boom.

Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God?

When the dead rise, there won't be any marriage. Our culture's view, marriage is about companionship, social standing, comfort. May be implications, throughout the Bible, marriage is given as a pointer to something else. Created to point to the final relationship of love and care and commitment from Jesus, bridegroom to his bride the church. Christians work at having good marriages, yes because they want to be happy, but more because the stakes are high – their marriages point to Jesus and the church. Means temporary, when Jesus and church united forever, marriage as we know it will be no more.

Sect that don't accept this. Also accept polygamy.

Why it's foolish to want a relationship so much that you do things that are wrong. Really bad to have a closed inward looking marriage not pointing others to Jesus and the church.

Why it would be really silly for anyone, like the Saducees to say, I am not going to get ready for the resurrection, by giving my life to Jesus because I want this relationship.

Drift through life making decisions about relationships based on their own happiness alone. Bad decisions. Resurrection is true, means having a relationship is far from the most important thing, and the one that you have is there to point to something greater.

Second have you not read when God spoke to Moses. Way back in the Old Testament God spoke to this guy Moses and he said “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” God said that, those guys were dead. Or not. God was still their God; faithful people who know God when they die are with him.

Precious trust for the many people watching this who have lost Christians they love to death. They are alive with God.

If that's true, then living for the resurrection is really important. Christians double-minded about this - truth that there is a resurrection is brought out when someone dies, but then Saducees days by day – we're all John Lennon – Imagine there's no heaven – Imagine all the people living for today.

Jesus God's Son. Came into this world not primarily to tell us something to do, but to serve us by dying so that we can be part of this new resurrected world God is making. Everything matters less than that, because God is alive.

Put our desire for perfect romance into place. Comfort for those who face the reality of death. The dead are not given in marriage. God is the God of the living.

Love not just religion

Tone aggressive, but people coming to Jesus trying to catch him out. This person impressed by Jesus and wants to know what he thinks.

Which command from God is most important?

Jesus can't narrow it down to one – says 2. Love God and love your neighbour. Lord is one, one God, love and worship only him.

The second is, love your neighbour as yourself.

Jesus first to put these two together. Loving God comes first, but it is necessarily followed by loving the people around you.

Image of God in people around you – you can't say you love God and not love your neighbour.

Deeply committed to a spirituality which practically outworks in love to neighbour. But also, is not just telling us we need to try harder to love our neighbour: rather you enter a deep relationship of love with the God who made you as the priority – out of that comes love of neighbour.

People try skipping one or the other. Christian think it's ok to be spiritual but actually be angry with my really annoying neighbour, to not consider effect of racism on my black neighbour, to not think I should protect the life of my unborn neighbour. Love God shows in loving the people with his image.

Not Christian, say yes, Jesus was all for us trying to be nicer. Wasn't against that, far more important, in priority first is being in relationship with God.

What matters to Jesus – acknowledge that God his Father is only God and everything belongs to him and love him. Change pours out of you in love for other people.

This teacher of the law agrees.

And he clocks what that means isn't important. To do those things – life transforming relationship of love with God, means you love other people as much as you love and serve yourself, much more important than religious practice.

Obvious why do we get it wrong – religious practice is easier. Gently say "I'm not sure you are being very loving" – but I come to church every week. Good, more important to love God and your neighbour.

Do you really know God in this amazing covenant love? I've been running the church for years.

Do it myself: Irony. I realised when I was sitting preparing this sermon that I hadn't spent any time that day reading the Bible, praying, worshipping and expressing my love and praise for God. When I realised, first thing I said to myself "but I am writing a sermon!"

Puts his finger on mistake we make.

Talk to you if you are not sure if you are a Christian, but intrigued. This idea, that it is not about trying to do religious stuff, but actually being in a relationship of love with God, sounds right to you.

Unlike other questioners, Jesus slapped down, Jesus says to this man that he's not far away from God.