

The End and the Beginning: Part 2

- Matthew, in the final chapters of his gospel, is sharing with us a series of momentous events. They are layered. If we peel back the layers – we can see more of God's new provision for man.
- They point towards an end and a beginning ,the old - and the new.
- What is clear is : God offers us opportunity and provision - enabling us to to live within the new. Our challenge is to live as new creations - wholly within the new covenant.

The greatest of the commandments and David's Master

- Matthew 22: 34 -36

Jesus answers the question ,what is the greatest commandment – “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your life and with all your strength” And the second commandment “you must love your neighbour as yourself.”

(The record in Mark (12 :30) adds in -“ with all your mind”- And here the word used for love is “agapeo”- the commitment of devotion.)

But is this question and the answer just a standard Jewish answer to this most basic of questions – or is there more here?

The greatest of the commandments and David's Master

- Matthew 22: 34 -36

There is more. In his answer Jesus is actually asking a question of the questioners –it is a challenge- to them - and to us.

And as we see, his answer goes further than his words. It is backed up by what he goes on to do– in his arrest , trial and crucifixion.

As was famously put , “Who Jesus Christ is becomes known in his saving action”

The greatest of the commandments and David's Master

- Matthew 22: 41 – 46

His answer - through his words and actions - reveal his identity. And in this context he now asks the question -which his opponents couldn't answer.

He asks the Pharisees : “whose son do you think the Messiah is”?

They answer “David's”.

Jesus points out that David calls the Messiah “Master” (Lord) – and if so , how can he be David's son?

The life and death battle for men in the last part of Matthew

- Matthew 22: 41 – 46

What lay at the heart of the exchanges in the final chapters of Matthew? We must not think of these as some kind of, “who has the better answers” debate, or Jesus saying something like, “you have got some things wrong , but let me help you.”

Jesus is telling the Jewish leaders that they are hypocrites (6.2,5,16,22.15,18). The fig tree, 21 18-20, the two sons 21 .28-32, the evil tenants 21:35-45, the son’s banquet,21:1-14, the entrapment attempts 22.15-33, and finally the series of the 7 woes 32:1-37.

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Now let's try and pull together what we are seeing.

1. Jesus is challenging the Pharisees (and ,of course, us) about the quality of their love, which is revealed in their question and in his answer and demonstration of love ... in his arrest , trial and crucifixion.
2. As was famously put, “who Jesus is becomes known in his saving action”
3. The Pharisee's had never asked the question he asks them about the identity of the Messiah – and they didn't know the answer – even though the answer was standing before them in flesh and blood!
4. Generally speaking a 1st century Jew – saw the Messiah as this conquering hero, a military victor. But this is clearly a lop-sided, inadequate view

The greatest of the commandments and David's Master

5. But if we are commanded to love God – who is this God?
6. He is the creator of everything –all people. Matthew tells us in 1:23 that God is “with us” and has taken on our humanity. David's master is the person who will not just throw off the yoke of political oppression – he will bring his saving, healing rule to the whole WORLD.. And defeat the ultimate enemy- sin and death.
7. Jesus fulfils the two great commandments for us! HE is loving God and loving his neighbour in his sacrifice.
8. He is truly God “with us”. And he is with you and me. He enables us to live in the new covenant. Where am I living?