

# Ministry of Grace

## Matthew 22

### Preface:

The previous chapter of Matthew's gospel ended with two parables of the vineyard. In the first one, the father asked two sons to go out and work in his vineyard. The first refused, but then repented and did as his father had asked. The second son said he would, but he was being insincere and did not go out and work. This is clearly a parable about the religious leaders refusing to obey God, the Father, and Jesus applied it directly to them. They rejected the Father.

The other parable with which Matthew ended the previous chapter involved a vineyard that the master asked tenants to tend, but they did not give the master the fruit of the vineyard. When the master sent several servants to receive what was due to him, the tenants chased them away and even killed some of them. Then, the master sent his son and the tenants rejected him, and throwing him outside the vineyard, they killed him. When asked what should be done to the tenants, the religious leaders said that the tenants should be killed and the land given to new tenants. Then, Jesus recited a well-known passage in [Psalms 118:22-23](#) and the religious leaders knew that He was referring to them and that they had just condemned themselves. This only made them want to get rid of Him even more. They rejected the Son

This chapter of Matthew starts off with the third parable in the series. As one might expect, this one is about the religious leaders rejecting the Spirit of God. Let's look at it.

### The Parable of the Wedding Feast

#### **Matthew 22:1-14**



<sup>1</sup>And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, <sup>2</sup>"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, <sup>3</sup>and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. <sup>4</sup>Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.' <sup>5</sup>But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup>while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. <sup>7</sup>The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. <sup>8</sup>Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. <sup>9</sup>Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' <sup>10</sup>And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests. <sup>11</sup>"But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. <sup>12</sup>And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. <sup>13</sup>Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' <sup>14</sup>For many are called, but few are chosen."

## Notes:

In this parable of the wedding feast we clearly see God (the Father) preparing a wedding feast for Jesus, His Son. The guests, who refused to come, represent the religious leaders and the people of Israel. This is a picture of Israel after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, because the Son is alive after having been killed in the previous parable. The wedding feast is representative of the wedding feast we will be part of as the bride of Christ.

In a Jewish wedding of Jesus' day the father of the husband would offer a dowry to purchase the bride. The woman was then asked whether she would marry the son. If she said yes, the son would return to his father's house (without the bride) and prepare a place for her. At some unknown time, the father would send the son to get the bride. The son would then bring her to his father's house, present her to the father, and then the couple would consummate the marriage. Following that, they would have a seven day honeymoon. At the end of the honeymoon, the father would prepare a wedding feast and invite the guests. Each guest who accepted the invitation was presented with a "wedding garment" that was to be worn at the wedding feast.

We can clearly see many parallels between the accepted wedding customs of Jesus' day and the marriage of the "bride of Christ" to the Son. Keep in mind that the story given here is a parable and is not intended to be a complete description of our wedding to Christ. Nonetheless, we can see many similarities, as did the religious leaders of Jesus day.

The most notable feature of this parable is the rejection of the invitation. In keeping with the previous two parables which portrayed the rejection of the Father and the Son, this is a portrayal of them rejecting the offer of the Spirit of God. Whether or not the religious leaders recognized the picture of rejecting all three persons of the godhead is doubtful. What is clear, however, is the fact that they recognized that it was, once again, a condemnation of themselves. As a result, we read in the next verse:

Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. (Matthew 22:15)

At this point, the narrative switches from the rejection of the Trinity to the Passover.

## Paying Taxes to Caesar

### **Matthew 22:15-22**



<sup>15</sup>Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. <sup>16</sup>And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. <sup>17</sup>Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" <sup>18</sup>But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? <sup>19</sup>Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. <sup>20</sup>And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" <sup>21</sup>They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." <sup>22</sup>When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.

**Mark 12:13-17** – <sup>13</sup>And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk. <sup>14</sup>And they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God.

Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?" <sup>15</sup>But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." <sup>16</sup>And they brought one. And he said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said to him, "Caesar's." <sup>17</sup>Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at him.

**Luke 20:19-26** – <sup>19</sup>The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at that very hour, for they perceived that he had told this parable against them, but they feared the people. <sup>20</sup>So they watched him and sent spies, who pretended to be sincere, that they might catch him in something he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor. <sup>21</sup>So they asked him, "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God. <sup>22</sup>Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" <sup>23</sup>But he perceived their craftiness, and said to them, <sup>24</sup>"Show me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" They said, "Caesar's." <sup>25</sup>He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." <sup>26</sup>And they were not able in the presence of the people to catch him in what he said, but marveling at his answer they became silent.

### Notes:

Since Jesus had obviously condemned the religious leaders for disobeying and denying God, the Pharisees, the Scribes, the Sadducees, and the Herodians were all determined to entrap Jesus. Having been humiliated in front of the crowds, they decided to trick Jesus into saying something that would permit them to arrest Him.

Let's take a minute to look at the various religious and political groups involved here. The Pharisees were "middle-class" Jews who had become experts in the Law of Moses and were most skillful in analyzing it and teaching it to the common people. They believed in God's complete sovereignty over the affairs of man, they believed in the eternity of man's soul, and they believed in the resurrection. The Scribes were a special group of these Pharisees who were responsible for making copies of the sacred documents and were authorized to write legal documents.

The Sadducees, on the other hand, were the aristocracy of the religious leaders. They were of the religious and political party of the High Priest. In contrast to the Pharisees, they believed in man's free will, not believing that man is either inherently good or evil, but that doing good or evil is at man's own choice. Thus, we see that they denied a sin nature. They also denied the eternity of the soul and, therefore, did not believe in the resurrection.

The Herodians did not have any strong theological beliefs like the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They were more political and were aligned with Rome. When Herod the Great became king in 37 B.C., he adopted the policy of selecting his own high priest. It appears that the Herodians were descendants of, and supporters of, the first High Priest chosen by Herod. Since the Sadducees had previously been the party of the High Priests, they were sworn enemies of the Herodians who now had a stranglehold on the High Priesthood.

The Pharisees had just as much contempt for the Herodians as the Sadducees did. The Pharisees believed that the Herodians had sold-out to Rome. Therefore, the Pharisees and the Herodians had vastly divergent opinions of the Roman tax. The Herodians were fully in support of it, but the Pharisees were very much against it, since it was in support of the foreign pagan oppressors.

In this challenge of paying taxes to Caesar, we now see a strange dual dichotomy. The Herodians were hoping that Jesus would side with them and say that it was lawful to pay the political tax. This

would show that Jesus was a traitor to the Jewish people and, therefore, the Pharisees would have to condemn Him. The Pharisees, however, were hoping that Jesus would side with them and oppose the payment of this tax, which would demonstrate that he was in rebellion against Rome. Thus, the Herodians would have to condemn Him.

Jesus' answer again left His questioners in amazed silence. If they used Roman coins (which they all did every day), then they were subject to Roman taxes. So the Herodians and the Pharisees went away defeated in their intent to compromise Jesus on this issue.

## **Sadducees Ask About the Resurrection**

### **Matthew 22:23-33**



<sup>23</sup>The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question, <sup>24</sup>saying, "Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up children for his brother.' <sup>25</sup>Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother. <sup>26</sup>So too the second and third, down to the seventh. <sup>27</sup>After them all, the woman died. <sup>28</sup>In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her." <sup>29</sup>But Jesus answered them, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. <sup>30</sup>For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. <sup>31</sup>And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: <sup>32</sup>'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living." <sup>33</sup>And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.

**Mark 12:18-27** – <sup>18</sup>And Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection. And they asked him a question, saying, <sup>19</sup>"Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. <sup>20</sup>There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no offspring. <sup>21</sup>And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. <sup>22</sup>And the seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman also died. <sup>23</sup>In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife." <sup>24</sup>Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God? <sup>25</sup>For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. <sup>26</sup>And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? <sup>27</sup>He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong."

**Luke 20:27-40** – <sup>27</sup>There came to him some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection, <sup>28</sup>and they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. <sup>29</sup>Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife, and died without children. <sup>30</sup>And the second <sup>31</sup>and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died. <sup>32</sup>Afterward the woman also died. <sup>33</sup>In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife." <sup>34</sup>And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, <sup>35</sup>but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, <sup>36</sup>for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of

God, being sons of the resurrection. <sup>37</sup> But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. <sup>38</sup> Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him." <sup>39</sup> Then some of the scribes answered, "Teacher, you have spoken well." <sup>40</sup> For they no longer dared to ask him any question.

### **Notes:**

As we mentioned earlier, the Sadducees didn't believe in the eternity of the soul or the resurrection (that's why they were sad-you-see) #baddadjoke! The Sadducees believed that only the Pentateuch (the first 5 books in the Old Testament) were inspired Scripture. They referred to this as the Torah. The rest of what we call the Old Testament includes "The Prophets" and "The writings." Together, the Torah, the Prophets, and The Writings make up what Jews call the Tanakh. This is actually an acronym, made from the first Hebrew letter of each of the three divisions: the *Torah* ('Law'), *Nevi'im* ('Prophets'), and *Ketuvim* ('Writings')—hence TaNaKh.

Now, because they wanted to entrap Jesus, the Sadducees presented him with a highly unlikely theoretical situation that they thought would be impossible for Him to answer. To them it was impossible, because they didn't believe in the resurrection, but Jesus easily shot down their argument and He didn't mince words.

"You are wrong," He said, "because you don't know the scriptures and you don't understand the power of God."

If they had believed in all of the Tanakh, they would have believed what Daniel said:

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (Daniel 12:2)

Still, even though they only believed in the Pentateuch, they should have known about the resurrection because of what Jesus quoted to them:

And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. (Exodus 3:6)

Jesus followed up that quote from Exodus with the statement, "He is not God of the dead, but of the living." So, the logical conclusion is, if He is the God of the living, then the soul must live on after physical death.

He then told them (and us) a very interesting but often misunderstood fact about life after the resurrection and something about angels:

For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

Angels are not married. They are all single. For this reason, many people misunderstand what the Bible says in Genesis chapter 6 where it says,

When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown. (Genesis 6:1-4)



The word "Nephilim" is a transliteration of the Hebrew word that means "a giant." These giants were the result of angels having sexual relations with human women. Notice that Jesus said that the angels don't marry, but He didn't say that they are incapable of sexual relations.

Jesus' response to the Sadducees not only silenced them, but it amazed the crowd who heard the interchange.

## The Great Commandment

### **Matthew 22:34-40**



<sup>34</sup>But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. <sup>35</sup>And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. <sup>36</sup>"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" <sup>37</sup>And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup>This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup>And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup>On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

**Mark 12:28-34** – <sup>28</sup>And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" <sup>29</sup>Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>30</sup>And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' <sup>31</sup>The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." <sup>32</sup>And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. <sup>33</sup>And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." <sup>34</sup>And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.

### Notes:

The next to challenge Jesus were the Pharisees (again). One of them, a lawyer who was experienced in arguing cases before a judge, asked Jesus which law was the greatest. This is a topic that had been discussed and argued among the Pharisees for years.

Apparently without hesitation, Jesus responded and quoted two commandments. He said that these two commandments are the foundation for all the Law and the Prophets. It is interesting to note that neither of these two commandments were actually among the Ten Commandments that Moses gave to the Israelites. However, if you look at the Ten Commandments you will see that the first four deal with our relationship with God (the Vertical Relationship) and could be summed up with what Jesus referred to as the greatest commandment:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

This is actually taken from **Deuteronomy 6:4-5** which says:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (**Deuteronomy 6:4-5**)



What you may not realize is that this is the opening part of the best known prayer in all of Hebrew liturgy. It is referred to as the *Shema*. The word *Shema* means “hear.” It is the first word in this prayer. The *Shema* is the centerpiece of the daily morning and evening prayers of all Jews. It was, and is, considered by some the most essential prayer in all of Judaism.

Traditionally, it is recited with the hand placed over the eyes.

Jesus’ response to this question from the Pharisee would have delighted the vast majority of those present. Whether a Pharisee, a Scribe, a Sadducee, or a commoner, each of them would have been intimately familiar with it and would have recognized how perfectly it answered the question. The real beauty of Jesus’ answer, however, was what He combined with it:

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Although it was also not one of the Ten Commandments, it nonetheless summed up the last six commandments, which deal with our relationship with others (the Horizontal Relationship).

And, in fact, the lawyer of the Pharisees was so impressed with Jesus’ answer that, according to Mark’s gospel account, he said:

You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. (Mark 12:32-33)

After this, according to Mark, no one dared to ask Him another question.

## Whose Son Is the Christ?

### **Matthew 22:41-46**



<sup>41</sup>Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, <sup>42</sup>saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" <sup>43</sup>They said to him, "The son of David." He said to them, "How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, <sup>44</sup>"The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet'? <sup>45</sup>If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?" <sup>46</sup>And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

**Mark 12:35-37** – <sup>35</sup>And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? <sup>36</sup>David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.' <sup>37</sup>David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?" And the great throng heard him gladly.

**Luke 20:41-44** – <sup>41</sup>But he said to them, "How can they say that the Christ is David's son? <sup>42</sup>For David himself says in the Book of Psalms, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, <sup>43</sup>until I make your enemies your footstool.' <sup>44</sup>David thus calls him Lord, so how is he his son?"

### Notes:

Since the religious leaders have all had their question answered perfectly, it was Jesus’ turn to ask a question. Actually, it was two questions. The first was, “Whose son is the Christ?” Remember that

“Christ” (Greek *christos*) is equivalent to “Messiah” (Hebrew *mashiach*). The Pharisees were quick to respond, “The Messiah is the son of David.”

You may recall that as Jesus was riding into Jerusalem on the donkey, the people were shouting “Hosanna to the Son of David.” Virtually everyone knew that the Messiah was to be born into the kingly line of David.

Jesus now challenged the Pharisees with a very tough second question. This was one of the basic misconceptions that the people had about the Messiah. They believed Him to be simply the human descendant of David. That is why Jesus quoted **Psalms 110:1**, a Psalm of David, which says:

The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." (**Psalms 110:1**)

We miss a little of the impact of this in English, so let's dig a little deeper. The word translated “LORD” is YHWH (Yahweh), which is the personal name of God. However, the word translated “Lord” is *adonay*, which is based on the word *adon*, meaning “sovereign, master, or lord.” In Hebrew, the word *adonay* is only used of God. So, what David was saying in **Psalms 110:1** was, “Yahweh says to my sovereign (my God) ...” Clearly, the person speaking and the person being spoken to in this verse are both God, according to David. But, how can that be if the Messiah is only a physical descendant of David. He must be God as well.

This completely baffled the Pharisees, and all the others standing around, so that no one was willing to challenge Jesus to a game of Heavenly Logic any more.

## **So What?**

As we mentioned previously, after the parable of the wedding feast, which represented the religious leaders' rejection of the Spirit, the focus of Matthew's gospel changes to that of the Passover. The questioning by the Pharisees, Scribes, Sadducees, and Herodians is part of what Moses referred to in Exodus chapter 12.

According to this passage, the Passover lamb was to be selected on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the first month, Nisan. It was to be without blemish and was to be observed until the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month, to make sure that it was perfect. Then, and only then, it was to be killed. The questioning by the religious leaders during the time from Jesus' triumphal entry (on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan) until His crucifixion (on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan) satisfied Moses' requirement to ensure that the Passover Lamb was without spot or blemish.

If you recall, after Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, He was taken before the Sanhedrin, where He was put on trial. This trial was presided over by the high priest Caiaphas. However, they could not find two witnesses who could corroborate each other, until two false witnesses said, “This man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.” The high priest demanded that Jesus respond to this and when He did not, the high priest said,

I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God. (**Matthew 26:63**)

When Jesus admitted that He was the Christ, the high priest tore his robes and accused Him of blasphemy, a crime punishable by death. However, since Jesus is the Christ, His statement was not blasphemy.



Jesus was then delivered to Pilate, who questioned Him and sent Him to Herod Antipas when he learned that Jesus was from Galilee. Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate because Jesus refused to answer any of his questions. Then, Pilate called together the chief priests and the religious rulers and said to them,

You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him.  
(Luke 23:14-15)

Finally, after finding no fault in Him, Pilate offered to release Jesus as part of the annual Passover tradition, but the people demanded that Jesus be crucified. Then, in front of the people,

he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." (Matthew 27:24b)

Therefore, we see that Jesus, the Lamb of God had been brought to the people on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan (just as Moses had instructed the people). He was then examined by everyone, (the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians, the chief priest, the Sanhedrin, Pilate, Herod, and the people) and was found to be without spot or blemish. Therefore, he completely fulfilled the requirements for the Passover Lamb and was sacrificed on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan in accordance with the Law of Moses.

As we approach the celebration of the resurrection of our Lord, let's reflect on who He is and what He has done for us. The original purpose for the Passover Lamb was to be a sacrifice for the people so that the "Death Angel" would pass-over any house that had the blood applied to the doorway.

Jesus, our Passover Lamb completely fulfilled all the requirements of the perfect Lamb of God so that He could be accepted as our sacrifice. During the crucifixion, from the sixth hour (noon) until the ninth hour (3:00 O'clock) there was darkness. During this time Jesus bore your sins and mine, feeling the agony of the torture called crucifixion. But that's not all. The reason for the darkness is that God, the Father, refused to even look on the Son because He was bearing our sins. This was the only time ever that there was no fellowship between the Father and the Son. This separation was so agonizing that Jesus finally cried out with a loud voice:

saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"  
(Matthew 27:36b)

Jesus then gave up His life for you and for me.

## **Now What?**

How do we respond to that? There basically are four ways we can respond. The first is to say, "I don't believe it! It made a good story of a noble act for the Jewish people. But it's just a story. It's a myth. It didn't really happen. After all, there's no real historical evidence that Jesus ever lived. And, if he did, there's no proof that he was crucified. And, even if he was, there's no proof that he rose from the dead." It's all a myth!

The second possible response is to say, "Yes, I think Jesus was real and that he was crucified and maybe even rose from the dead. But, so what? He may have been a good man who did a lot of good things, but I don't think he is God. There are lots of religions in the world and each one of them thinks theirs is the real thing. Sorry, it's just too much to think that Jesus was some kind of a god. He was just a man."

The third possible response is to say, “Yes, I believe that Jesus died on the cross to save me from the penalty of my sins. I’ve got my ticket into heaven, but I’m not a religious fanatic. I’m a believer but I’ve got to live my life looking out for myself, because nobody else is going to do it for me. Leave me alone and don’t tell me what to do.”

Finally, you could say, “Woe is me, for I was doomed. But, praise be to God that I am saved. I am a sinful person and I don’t deserve the gift of eternal life that has been handed to me. I deserve the blue flames of Hell. Thank-you Jesus, for offering yourself in my place. Thank-you, for being obedient to your Father’s will. Lord, help me to do your will. I have not been the best Christian I could be. Please, help me to change!

Listen, my friends. The perfect Lamb of God gave His life for you. What is your response? Are you going to give to Him anything in return?

**Let’s pray.**

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