

# All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 65

by Zac Poonen

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*The only way to stand before God is in the righteousness of Christ, and we must seek to understand God's word and His power in order to discern the wickedness and malice of others and to stand before Him in humility.*

**Duration:** 25:46

**Scripture:** Matthew 22:11-14, Matthew 22:21, Matthew 22:37-39, Revelation 19:8

**Topics:** "Righteousness Of Christ", "Progressive Sanctification"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the importance of being clothed in the righteousness of Christ to stand before God, emphasizing the distinction between forgiveness and justification. It highlights the need to humbly rely on Christ's righteousness, the process of progressive sanctification, and the transformation by the Holy Spirit. The sermon also explores the significance of humility, discernment, and the balance between knowing God's word and experiencing His power. Jesus' responses to various challenges underscore the principles of rendering to Caesar what is his, loving God with all our being, and loving our neighbors as ourselves.

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## Transcript

We continue our study today on all that Jesus taught in going through the Gospel of Matthew. And in our last session we looked at Matthew 22 and verses 1 to 14, where this man without the wedding robe was cast out. It is so important, so very very important to understand that the only way we can stand before God is if we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ, not just with having our sins forgiven.

That's why we need to be forgiven as well as justified. Many Christians don't see the difference between these two. Forgiveness just deals with our past sins blotted out through the blood of Christ, His death on the cross.

But to stand before God, I still need to have my sinful nature covered by the righteousness of Christ, which is put to my account or with which I'm clothed, so I can stand before God in Christ's righteousness. This is what it means to be in Christ or Christ in me, Christ my righteousness. And this humbles our pride and all through our life, Christ alone is our righteousness.

I can never in my earthly life or even in heaven stand before God on the basis of my righteousness. God imparts his righteousness to us little by little throughout our earthly life. That is progressive sanctification.

But throughout we need to stand before God only in the righteousness of Christ. Our own righteousness is like filthy rags. But once we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ and then we surrender to the Holy Spirit and then we seek to walk in God's will, denying our own will, then our righteousness becomes like it says in Revelation 19 and verse 8. Our righteousness, which was once like filthy rags, as we are sanctified, becomes our sparkling wedding garment in the final day.

This is what the Bible teaches about human righteousness, Christ's righteousness, and how we can have our own life so transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit that we partaking of God's nature bring forth that which is a righteousness acceptable before God and becomes our wedding dress in the day that Christ returns. This is an amazing truth. I would encourage you to read this section and understand it thoroughly so that we never boast before God as if we're standing before God on the basis of something we have done or accomplished.

Many are called but few are chosen, it says in Matthew 22, 14, meaning that God invites everybody. But very few seem to be willing to accept the righteousness that Christ gives and to stand only on the basis of that. What would be the mark? How would you know whether you are standing on the basis of Christ's righteousness alone or whether you have a secret trust in your own righteousness? I think it's very easy to know.

Do you look down on any other believer? Do you feel that you are more accepted by God than other believers because of your holiness or righteousness or because you didn't commit such gross sins as other people? Then you are definitely standing on your own righteousness. Think of these beggars who come with different degrees of dirt and filth and torn clothes, but once they put the wedding garment on at the feast, then they are all the same. In the story in Matthew 22, verses 1 to 14, that free wedding garment that was given to them at the gate to cover their filthy robes and rags, when they put that on, what's underneath is not visible and as they look at each other, they are all exactly the same.

The one who has been a believer for 50 years and the one who came to the Lord today, accepted on the same basis. The one who has been sitting at the wedding feast for 50 years, it's on the basis of the white garment that he's accepted and the other one who just came in this morning, he's accepted on the basis of the white garment. They are equal.

This is the problem, you know, in the story of the laborers that the people who came in the first hour said in Matthew 20 and verse 12, you have made these lost fellows equal to us. Many Christians don't like other people being made equal to them, who they feel are junior. This is one of the great sins in Christendom.

You find in many churches, people think I'm a senior worker, so I must have more respect, but in seniority is in government service, not in the church. In the church, it's a question of who is more spiritual, not who's more senior, not who's been in the church longer, but who's grown in grace and become more spiritual and been gripped by the truth of God. That is the test.

So it's very important for us to understand this right at the beginning and that's why it says many are called but a few are chosen and the ones who are chosen, I'll tell you, are the ones who remain humble. So humility is the great secret here. In verse 15, then the Pharisees went and counseled together how they might trap him and what he said.

Back to the same thing that we see again and again and again in the Gospel of Matthew, where we find these religious people always trying to trip up Christ in some way, trying to catch him in some word or

some sentence he said. It's exactly like a lot of religious people today who don't like preachers who preach holiness and victory over sin and building the body of Christ and freedom from the love of money. They're always trying to trap them in some way but God doesn't allow them to trap his servants.

And so they sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians and they wanted to trap him into saying something which would bring the wrath of the government upon Christ. And that's also a trick that a lot of religious Christians would try today on their fellow Christians sometimes. If we can get the government itself to turn against this group, which we don't like, that would be great.

Then we don't have to deal with them. The government will deal with them. And so they came very subtly asking him a question about taxes.

And of course they start with their usual flattery, hypocritical flattery, they didn't believe one word of it but they said, teacher, we know you are truthful, Matthew 22, 16, and teach the way of God in truth and you defer to no one, you're not partial to anyone. Be careful, whenever anybody comes and praises you like that, they are your biggest enemies. People who talk in that language, you're the greatest man of God, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

Be careful, teacher, we know you're truthful and that you teach the way of God in truth and defer to no one, you're not partial to anyone. And they think that by that they can soften up the ground and get Jesus to reply to them. But Jesus can see through all that.

If you're a servant of God, you need to see through the flattery of other people as well, otherwise you'll get trapped. So tell us, therefore, what do you think? Is it lawful to give a poll tax to Caesar? That's what they wanted to ask. What is the need for all that introductory flattery? That was to try and get Jesus to become weak so that he'd give a foolish answer.

But the Lord was not interested in the praise of men. They didn't realize that Christ was so far above all this flattery and empty praise, he couldn't care less, even if it was genuine praise, it wouldn't have affected him. Dear brothers and sisters, that's how we must be, free from the opinions of men.

Yeah, people want to appreciate us and are thankful to us for what we've done for them, that's great. We don't stop them, we don't tell them to keep quiet. It's the right thing for people to express appreciation and thankfulness to a servant of God for the benefit they've got from him.

But we must be careful that that doesn't go to our heads. We just pass it on to God and say, well, all the glory is God's, and move on. Otherwise, we'll get trapped.

Tell us, therefore, what do you think? Is it lawful to give a poll tax to Caesar or not? And you know, whatever he says, he's going to be caught. If he says no, the government can catch him and say, hey, you're telling people not to pay their taxes. If he says yes, they can get the Jews to say, hey, this guy's telling us to serve these Roman rulers who are ruling over our country.

Get one group or the other against this preacher. These people are playing politics. And so Jesus perceived their malice.

It's an interesting word. He perceived their wickedness. There was wickedness there.

Can you imagine there's wickedness in people who say, oh, we know that you're truthful and teach the way of God in truth, defer to no one, you're partial to no one. Can you see wickedness in those statements? That's where Jesus had discernment, and that's why we need discernment. He perceived their wickedness and their malice.

And he said, why are you testing me, you hypocrites? He was straight. There was no question of beating about the bush in Jesus' words. Show me the coin urged for the poll tax, used for the poll tax.

And they brought him a denarius. Here it is. This is what we pay as poll tax.

He said to them, whose likeness and inscription is on this? They said to him, that's Caesar's. Well, then give to Caesar. What is Caesar's? And give to God the things that are God's.

And they marveled at his answer. What could they say to that? The government could not catch him for saying that because he said give to Caesar what is Caesar's. And the Jews could not catch him for that because he said you must give to God what is God's.

And you decide what is Caesar's and what is God's. If we trust in God and say, Father, I want to walk on earth like Jesus walked. I want to have a word in season for everybody who comes and asks me a question.

I want to tell you in Jesus' name that the Father will give you the same ability that Jesus had to be able to answer questions like this. When people come to us with difficult questions, he'll give us the same ability that he gave to Jesus Christ. Let me show you a promise in Luke chapter 21 and verse 15.

Luke 21 and verse 15 we read, the Lord says, I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. I will give you a mouth or utterance and wisdom which none of your enemies will be able to refute. I have claimed that promise numerous times when I've had to reply to people who seek to attack me in one way or the other.

I said, Lord, give me a mouth and a wisdom which will shut their mouths. And again and again and again God has done that. You can't get it if you don't ask for it.

You don't have because you don't ask. You don't ask for wisdom, you don't get it. Or you ask and you don't believe God will give it to you, you still don't get it.

But if you ask and you believe God will give it to you, James 1 says, he'll give you as much wisdom as you want. But if you ask and you don't believe, James says, let not that man think he'll receive anything from the Lord. So we can have the same wisdom too to answer people according to when they try to trap us somewhere and humble us somewhere by their religiosity.

I remember once I was in a meeting somewhere with a group in the United States where everybody wore beards. Their particular group, it was one of their laws that every man must have a beard. I say, I've got no objection to that.

Everybody can have their own convictions on these matters. But I was speaking in this church in a whole day conference and during the lunch session we were sitting at the table and I was the only man without a beard. And all the others were there with beards.

And some of them had not liked what I taught in the morning sessions there. It was contrary to a lot of doctrines they believed in. And one man sitting there in front of me wanted to humiliate me in the presence of all the others.

And so in the hearing of the others while we were having our meal, he asked me a question. He said, Brother Zach, did God make a mistake in giving you hair on your face? Or did you make a mistake in cutting it off? Or shaving it off? And I quickly inwardly said, Lord, I've got to get an answer for this. You've got to give me a mouth and a wisdom now.

And immediately God gave me a word. And I said to him, Brother, did God make a mistake in giving you nails in your fingers? Or did you make a mistake in trimming them and cutting them off? Silence. Just like here.

What could he say? It was a ridiculous question he asked me, so I gave him a ridiculous answer. And so I've discovered that's not the only occasion. There are other situations like this where I found God's given me a right answer to people according to their... because I asked for it.

And I believed God would give it to me. And I'm saying that to encourage you. Of course, you know, when I discovered that he was embarrassed and, you know, the tables were turned on him, I immediately changed the subject so that I would not embarrass him any further and began to talk about something else so that he didn't feel awkward because of me because I didn't want to lose him as a friend.

And there was a lot of blessing in the afternoon session after that. So I want to encourage you by that testimony to say, you know, God can give you wisdom in all types of situations when you find people are trying to trap you in something. And hearing this, they marveled and left him and went their way.

And then another group came. The Pharisees and the Sadducees were always after Jesus. And the Sadducees came one day, and these are the people who say there's no resurrection.

You know, the Pharisees are a picture of the fundamentalists who believe evangelicals, who believe all the right doctrines. And the Sadducees are a picture of the liberals who call themselves Christians like they call themselves Jews but they didn't believe in a resurrection. And like liberal Christians today who don't believe in miracles and all that, etc.

On that day, some Sadducees who say there's no resurrection came to him and questioned him and said, Well, teacher, Moses said that if a man dies and he has no children, his brother, as next of kin, shall marry his wife and raise up an offspring to his brother. And now they tell this fictitious story, unimaginable fictitious story. There were seven brothers, he says, with us.

And the first married and died. And had no offspring, left his wife to his brother. And like that, the second and the third down to the seventh.

They all died. Now, this is obviously fiction. But they spoke as if it actually happened.

And the woman also died. Now, in the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven will she be? Because they all had her. And Jesus answered to them, You are mistaken.

Because you don't understand the scriptures and you don't know the power of God. There are two things we need. Understanding of the scriptures and the power of God.

It's a beautiful verse, Matthew 22 and verse 29. Before we look at Jesus' answer to this question, look at Jesus' rebuke to them. He says, Your problem is, you don't know God's word and you don't have His power.

Do you know the two things we need in our life to serve God and to understand His ways? We need to know the word of God. And we need the mighty power of the Holy Spirit. One alone will not do.

It's like, if you want an engine, a railway engine, to move from one station to another, there are two things it requires. One is the rails and the other is power from steam or diesel or whatever it is. If you have only one of these, it can't move from one place to another.

Which is more important? The rails or the power? Steam or, let's say in the olden days, they had steam engines. Is it the steam or the rails? Well, you need both. And we find in Christendom sometimes, some groups concentrate on the rails.

Their only interest is the word of God. And every Sunday they come and polish the rails and polish the rails and polish the rails, but the engine's not moving because they don't have any steam. And they look down on others who ignore the rails.

They say the rails are very important. And then at the other extreme, you have certain other people who say, well, the steam is very important. What's the use of having an engine without any steam? And so they fill it up with steam, but they say rails are not important, and the result is they drive off in any direction, go, they derail and get stuck in the mud.

They're also stuck just like the other group. The other group is stuck because it didn't have steam. This group is stuck in the mud because it ignored the rails and went off the rails.

But this group, because it's got steam, it can blow the whistle and make a lot of noise in their meetings. They make a lot of noise, but they're in the ditch as well. Both don't move forward.

You see them 10 years later, the people in these churches, there's no spiritual growth. You see they have not become holier, they have not got a greater understanding of God. They're just pulling the whistle and blowing the steam, one group and the others are polishing the rails every Sunday.

Is this Christianity? It's both and, not either or. We need to understand the scriptures and we need to experience the power of God. It's a beautiful verse.

We need to know God's word and we need to have the power of the Holy Spirit. And the devil tries to make you concentrate on one or the other and miss out on what God wants us to have. Then he answers their question.

He says, in the resurrection, they don't marry. You don't know that. And they're not given in marriage.

But they're like the angels in heaven. There's no sex there to produce children and to be married. No, in the resurrection of the dead, haven't you heard what was spoken to you by God saying, I'm the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.

He's not the God of the dead, but of the living. When he says that I'm the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he's not talking about dead people, he's talking about people who are still living in heaven. And that's what Jesus said.

So we see that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were living in heaven. Not in their bodies. Their bodies were on earth, but in their spirits.

And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at his teaching. See, in everything you find there's a lesson to learn. For example, in the earlier thing that we considered, where Jesus said in verse 21, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.

It was an answer directly from God. But in it, there's more than just that answer that silenced those people. There's a principle we can learn there.

And that is, that before we give to God anything, we must give to Caesar what is his. What does that mean? That means that if you have borrowed money from somebody, let's take Caesar as representing a human being, you owe them money. And you haven't paid him back.

God says, don't give me that. Don't give me money in my offering box, because you're putting his money into my box. Money that should righteously go to him, you're putting in my offering box.

I don't want that guy's money. You go and give him his money. Give me what's yours.

If you want to put something in the offering box, put your money, not his money. You understand that? That when you're in debt, what you're giving to God is somebody else's money? I'm not talking about where you're paying a monthly mortgage on your house, or your car, or something like that, which is a fixed amount that you give, and the rest of the money is yours, so you can give to God. That's okay.

I'm talking about where you're borrowed from some human being, and you haven't given, or you cheated the government of some taxes, and you haven't repaid it. Then what you're giving to God is somebody else's money. It's Caesar's.

And the Lord says, who should you put first? Man. Caesar. Then put God after.

That means don't give God somebody else's money. It's a very simple principle, and we must remember that, that God doesn't want what belongs to somebody else. That's why it's so important to be free from debt.

The same way here, you see in this statement, what an important principle. You must know the scriptures, and you must know the power of God. In these replies that the Lord gave, there's such a depth of meaning.

If you meditate on it, there's more than one meaning in a single verse of scripture. So we move on to the next section, where the Pharisees heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence. They gathered themselves together and said, hey, we've got to trap him in some other way.

They were always out to trap Jesus, and the Pharisees were silent, the Sadducees were silent. They said, okay, let's get somebody else now. Then a lawyer came up, and he asked, lawyer means someone who really studied the law, that's what it means there, and asked him a question saying, teacher, by the way, which is the great commandment in the law? For the Jews, you know which the great commandment was? Keeping the Sabbath.

That means you don't get anybody healed on the Sabbath day, you don't allow a man to carry his bed on the Sabbath day. Of course, you'll pull out your sheep from the ditch on the Sabbath day if he falls there,

that's what Jesus said. But he wanted to say, what are you going to say? Are you going to say the Sabbath or something else? And Jesus said, the great commandment in the law is you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.

That's the great and foremost commandment. And the second is like unto it, love your neighbor as yourself. These are like two arms of the cross.

Love God with all your heart, the vertical arm, and love your neighbor as yourself, the horizontal arm. That's the cross. And you can't separate it.

It's not just loving God, it's not just loving your neighbor. And it's not loving your neighbor first. For those who think social work is the most important thing to do, are putting the first commandment as love your neighbor.

No. And those who just sit in a monastery and just say, I'm just going to talk to God all the time, they're also wrong. You've got to love God and love your neighbor.

But loving God comes first. On these two commandments depend the whole law and the prophets. Everything in the Bible, Jesus said, is summed up in two commandments.

It's wonderful to know that. Every commandment in the Bible can be put in a nutshell in these two commandments. Love God with all your heart, soul, and strength.

And to love others as yourself. And if we can understand this, and what does it mean to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind? I've got to love God with my mind. My mind is important.

I've got to love God with my heart. My love and affection for God is important. And Jesus said, if you love me, keep my commandments.

That means with all my strength, I've got to do God's will. This is what it means to love God. And if I love God, I love my fellow believer.

If somebody says, I love God, but he can't love his fellow believer, he's a liar, John says. So let's keep this in mind. We continue our study in our next episode.

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