

Mt. 22:34-46**God's command to love**

Vv. 3-46. The Pharisees decide to test Jesus so one of their number, an expert in the law, questions Jesus. He wants to test Jesus' attitude to the law, was Jesus undermining the law? The motivation for the question is to trap Jesus not to seek the truth.

Vv. 37-39. Jesus answers by linking together two commandments. Jesus quotes from **Deut. 6:5, 'Love the Lord your God'... and from Lev. 19:18, 'love your neighbour as yourself'**. Deut. 6:4-9 was repeated twice daily by sincere Jews. 'Heart, soul and mind', don't denote different 'parts' of humans. They represent the totality of being human, a person's whole being. (Mk. and Lk. add an extra noun, 'strength').

The '**neighbour**' in Leviticus was normally interpreted as only including fellow Jews or aliens living in Israel. Jesus gives 'neighbour' the widest possible meaning (see Mt. 5:43ff, 'love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, see Romans 13:8-10 'love is the fulfilment of the law', and Jn. 3:16ff.).

V. 40. Jesus is saying that the **commandments of the law** and the **teaching of the prophets** cannot be fulfilled apart from the twofold love commandments.

Reflection/Response.

How can people be **commanded** to love?

How is it possible to love God with our whole being and to love our neighbours as ourselves?

Read Rm. 8:37-39 – note how God's love enables us to be 'conquerors'.

Vv. 41-42a. Jesus takes the initiative and questions the Pharisees. Jesus asks whose son is the Christ (Messiah).

V. 42b. 'The son of David', they reply. This is not simply an academic question as Jesus has earlier been called the 'Son of David' by the crowds as he rode into Jerusalem (21:9, 15) and this has led to his controversies with the religious leaders.

V. 43-46. Jesus uses a traditional Rabbinic debating style contrasting two scriptures apparently in conflict. Jesus poses the conflict, 'If then David calls him "Lord", how can he be David's son?' Jesus leaves his hearers to resolve the conflict.

Reflection/Response.

Jesus' human lineage (Mt. 1:1ff) and his 'name', Immanuel (Mt. 1:18-23) reveal more of who he is.

Also read Jn. 1:1-14.

How would people see that Jesus Christ is our closest friend, our Saviour and our Lord?