

**Luke 20:1** ¶ And it came to pass, *that* on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon *him* with the elders,

**Luke 20:2** And spake unto him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority?

**Luke 20:3** And he answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer me:

**Luke 20:4** The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?

**Luke 20:5** And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him not?

**Luke 20:6** But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet.

**Luke 20:7** And they answered, that they could not tell whence *it was*.

**Luke 20:8** And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

On one of the days Jesus was teaching in the temple and preaching the gospel, He was approached by the chief priests, scribes and elders. They questioned Him as to what authority He attributed His right to “do these things.” In light of the context from the previous chapter, I believe they were referencing His act of throwing out of the temple those that were making merchandise of those that came to worship there as well as His authoritative teaching of God’s word.

Again, as He often did, Jesus responded to their question with a question. He asked them first to tell Him whether or not John’s baptism was on the authority of heaven (i.e., God) or of men. As they began to discuss how to answer Him, they realized that they were trapped. If they said, “Of heaven,” He would immediately question why they did not believe him. (Reminder—John publicly declared Jesus as the true anointed One, the Messiah.) If they said, “Of men,” they feared for their safety since the people were persuaded that John was a prophet of God. As all cowards do, they declared they didn’t know. In light of their answer, Jesus also refused to answer them. Their reasoning not to answer Jesus also reveals that their hearts were hard; they had already made up their mind about Jesus and were not willing to consider that they might be wrong.

We can certainly learn from Jesus. He always responded to His enemies with calm wisdom and insight. He often responded to a question with a question that revealed their true motives. He never gave them a platform to spue their venom in light of His response. He often then used the moment as an opportunity to teach those around Him who were truth seekers.

It stood out to me that Luke describes Jesus as teaching and preaching the gospel. I can’t help but wonder how He presented the gospel since He was yet to die and rise victorious from the grave. I imagine He presented it much as He did to Nicodemus and focused on the need to be born again. He probably also taught the truth He shared with the rich man—that one needed to be willing to forsake all and follow Him.

**Luke 20:9** ¶ Then began he to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time.

**Luke 20:10** And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent *him* away empty.

**Luke 20:11** And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated *him* shamefully, and sent *him* away empty.

**Luke 20:12** And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast *him* out.

**Luke 20:13** Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence *him* when they see him.

**Luke 20:14** But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.

**Luke 20:15** So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed *him*. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?

In context, this parable is connected to the questioning of Jesus' authority and seems to be directed primarily to the spiritual leaders who questioned Him. He tells the story of a certain man who plants a vineyard and then rents it out to some farmers for a share of the profit. He then leaves to go on a long trip to a far away country. When it came time to reap the harvest, he sent a servant to receive his share of the harvest; but the hired farmers beat the servant up and sent him away empty. So the landlord sends another servant, but he was treated the same way. The landlord sends yet a third servant who was also wounded and cast out. The landlord finally decides to send his beloved son thinking that surely the tenant farmers would honor him. Instead, the tenant farmers saw this as an opportunity. They reasoned that if they killed the heir, the inheritance would become theirs; so they killed him. One of the Intervarsity Press commentaries states, "in certain conditions the property of a Gentile or a proselyte who died without making a will would pass to the first person who gained possession of it."

These spiritual leaders were well aware that both Isaiah and Jeremiah had likened Israel to God's vineyard. In that context, God the Father would be pictured by the owner of the vineyard, His prophets (often rejected and persecuted) represented by the servants sent to reap His harvest from the vineyard, and Jesus (though not yet killed) pictured by the "beloved son." In a sense, the wicked tenants would represent servants of Satan, the one who so desperately longs to own not only the vineyard, but also the whole earth, and not the servants of God they declared themselves to be who should have provided true spiritual leadership to the people and given honor to both the prophets and His Son.

At the end of the story Jesus asks, (my paraphrase) "What should the lord of the vineyard do to the wicked tenant farmers?"

**Luke 20:16** He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard *it*, they said, God forbid.

**Luke 20:17** And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?

**Luke 20:18** Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

**Luke 20:19** And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.

Jesus then proceeds to answer the question—He will come and avenge the death of his son by killing the husbandmen and giving the vineyard to others.

I am intrigued by the response of the audience—“God forbid.” Why did they not see His answer in light of righteous judgment? Verse 19 gives the answer—they realized that the story was against them.

In light of the response of His audience, Jesus asks another question—What does the scripture mean when it says that the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? In other words, the One you are rejecting (Me) will one day be shown to exercise God’s authority. This is a quote from the Psalms.

*Psalms 118:22–23 “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD’S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.”*

Jesus goes on to say that whoever falls on that stone will be broken, but whoever has the stone fall on him will be destroyed. In my mind this is a word picture of repentance to salvation vs. eternal damnation.

Note that at this time the spiritual leaders were afraid to do anything publicly against Jesus because they feared the people. In just a few days they will be leading the people in a chant of “His blood *be* on us, and on our children.”

**Luke 20:20 ¶** And they watched *him*, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.

**Luke 20:21** And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of *any*, but teachest the way of God truly:

**Luke 20:22** Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?

For the time being they chose to keep Jesus under observation and sent some from among them to mingle among the common people and serve as spies. Their intent was to find evidence from His teaching that would justify delivering Him over to the power and authority of the governor as seditious. These spies weren’t just passive observers; they tried to entrap Him with leading questions. Note how they posed as humble by addressing Him as “Master” and declaring that they knew His teaching to be according to God’s truth. The question (my

paraphrase): Does God's law really require us to pay taxes to Caesar? They figure that His answer will work to their benefit whether His answer is "yes" or "no." If yes, then it will anger the people; if no, then it will anger the ruling authorities.

**Luke 20:23 But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me?**

**Luke 20:24 Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar's.**

**Luke 20:25 And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.**

**Luke 20:26 And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.**

Jesus was well aware of the trap they had set and acknowledges it with His question. He then asks for them to show Him a penny, a denarius. Next, He asks whose image and inscription is on it, and they rightly answer that it is Caesar's. Jesus then declares that they should give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things which are God's. My interpretation of their response—They couldn't believe their ears; He had again shown His wisdom to be far greater than their own so they had to continue to bide their time.

Hidden in Jesus' answer is a beautiful truth. Just as the Roman coin was imprinted with the image and inscription of Caesar, so man is imprinted with the image of God and the inscription of God on his heart. In light of that truth, we owe God our lives.

*Genesis 1:27 "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."*

*Romans 1:19 "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them."*

**Luke 20:27 ¶ Then came to *him* certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked him,**

**Luke 20:28 Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.**

**Luke 20:29 There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children.**

**Luke 20:30 And the second took her to wife, and he died childless.**

**Luke 20:31 And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died.**

**Luke 20:32 Last of all the woman died also.**

**Luke 20:33 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife.**

At this point we are told that Jesus is approached by the Sadducees, a group that did not believe in resurrection. (As I have so often heard, that is why they were

“sad you see.”) Chuck Smith notes that they also only considered the five books of Moses to be the inspired word of God.

These men posed a scenario to Jesus as follows: Moses tells us that if a man’s brother dies and his widow is childless, his brother should take her as his wife and raise up seed in his brother’s name. Suppose there is a man with seven brothers who dies without an heir. The first brother takes the widow as his wife, but he also dies without producing an heir. The same happens with each of the remaining five brothers and finally the widow dies. Their question: Whose wife is she in the resurrection?

**Luke 20:34 And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage:**

**Luke 20:35 But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage:**

**Luke 20:36 Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.**

**Luke 20:37 Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.**

**Luke 20:38 For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.**

**Luke 20:39 ¶ Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said.**

**Luke 20:40 And after that they durst not ask him any *question at all*.**

Jesus does not hesitate with His answer. Matthew adds some significant information in his account.

*Matthew 22:29 “Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.”*

Reminder, though the Sadducees are among the spiritual leaders of the people, Jesus declared that they did not understand the scripture correctly nor did they truly understand the power of God. This is a much needed truth that believers need to understand today. The fact that someone represents himself as one with biblical understanding is not proof that he/she actually possesses biblical understanding. God has made His word available to each one of us. We are accountable before Him according to that revelation—not according to some person’s interpretation of it. We are to consider everything we are taught just as did the Bereans whom Paul commended in Acts.

*Acts 17:10–11 “And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that **they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.**”*

Back to the text—Jesus declared that it is only in this world that people are joined in marriage. Those accounted worthy to be part of God’s kingdom will be like

the angels in relationship to one another without marriage and will possess eternal life; they will be part of God's family and recognized as His children. The purpose of marriage is to produce children; there will be no more children born in eternity. As part of the family of the eternal God, we as His children will also possess eternal life.

Jesus goes on to declare that even the writings of Moses affirmed the truth of the resurrection. When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, He addressed Himself to Moses as "the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

*Exodus 3:4–6 "And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy 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 upon God."*

This was a statement of being the God of the living—not the dead—a statement that implied future resurrection for these great founding fathers of the nation of Israel. One of the scribes (who evidently was not a Sadducee) quickly agreed with Jesus.

Again, He had shown superior wisdom to His enemies, and after this incident we are told that they decided not to ask Him any more questions and give Him further opportunity to upstage them.

**Luke 20:41 And he said unto them, How say they that Christ is David's son?  
Luke 20:42 And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,  
Luke 20:43 Till I make thine enemies thy footstool.  
Luke 20:44 David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he then his son?**

Jesus decided to engage the Sadducees further; He asked them how the scripture could say that Christ (the Messiah) is David's son. He then quotes David from the book of Psalms.

*Psalms 110:1 "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."*

Though not as clear to us through the wording, it was evidently understood that God is addressing the Christ, the Messiah, in this psalm of David. That being the case, Jesus is asking them—How can David address His Son, the promised Messiah that would reign as King forever in Israel, as Lord?

The obvious answer is that David will have a part in the resurrection and the future Kingdom of God on earth and subject to the rule of His Son who is also the Son of God. We know that Son to be Jesus the Messiah, who will one day (in

the not too distant future I believe) establish His earthly kingdom and rule as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

**Luke 20:45 Then in the audience of all the people he said unto his disciples,  
Luke 20:46 Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts;  
Luke 20:47 Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.**

Luke closes this section with Jesus turning to make specific address to His disciples loud enough for all those in the audience to hear. He warns them to beware the scribes whom He describes as showing arrogant pride in their positions of authority over the people and their privilege of occupying the most coveted seats in the synagogues and seats of honor during public feasts. He also denounces them for the way they take advantage of widows (some of the most vulnerable in that society) and then make a public display of piety through their prayers. Jesus then declares that these spiritual leaders will receive a greater damnation (than those who are not so privileged and honored as they is implied). This is another statement that seems to indicate varying degrees of eternal punishment according to God's judgment.