

Cultivate Gospel of Luke Study
Lesson Thirty-Five

Chapter 20

Read and meditate on Luke Chapter 20a
and prayerfully answer the following questions before Tuesday's class.

Luke Chapter 20

Luke presented Jesus' teachings in the temple beginning with the opposition from the religious leaders and leading to His' condemnation of them. "Jesus had upset the normal 'religious' atmosphere of the temple, which led the religious leaders to question His authority."
(Thomas Constable)

For three years, the Jewish religious leaders had been searching for an angle to take down Jesus. This chapter represents one of their last attempts to undermine Jesus in a perceived legal way. They knew that they could not kill Jesus outright. The religious leaders did not want to start a riot by arresting him without cause. Their solution was to "trick" him into saying something that would give them a reason to arrest him.

Jesus handled the religious leaders skillfully, with the power and wisdom that he possessed as God and Savior. It was the insincerity of the religious leaders that betrayed them and hastened their determination to murder Jesus.

Luke 20: 1-8 The Authority of Jesus Challenged

Read Matthew 21:23-27; Mark 11:27-33

Jesus showed great courage by boldly entering Jerusalem and driving out the corrupt merchants from the temple courts. Now the religious leaders wanted to know by what right Jesus did such things – especially because He did not have traditional rabbinical training.

"Since John, like Jesus, was not a rabbi, the authorities' response to the one would affect their response to the other." (Marvin Pate – Moody Bible Institute)

Warren Wiersbe wrote that the chief priests claimed their authority from Moses and in turn the men who studied under them or their teachings received the same authority. All who shared in these teachings were sure of their authority and were not afraid to confront Jesus.

1. Why did Jesus choose not to answer the religious leaders' questions about his authority?

The leaders could not answer Jesus, and Jesus chose not to answer them. Jesus refused to give more explanation to people who refused to accept the facts that they already possessed.

Luke 20: 9-18 The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

This sort of tenant farming arrangement was a common practice in Jesus' day.

"Again you will plant vineyards, on the hills of Samaria; The planters will plant and will enjoy them." Jeremiah 31:5 and also Isaiah 61:5: *"Strangers will stand and pasture your flocks and foreigners will be your farmers and your vinedressers."*

"Since ancient times, Israel's history and culture have been shaped by the abundant presence of the vine, both in its agricultural production and in its symbolism, widely mentioned in biblical texts" (All Israel News Staff | Published: April 29, 2024)

Jesus told a parable that would clearly define his authority. The setting for the story was a vineyard, something familiar to everyone in the crowd. They knew of its physical features and landscape as well as its spiritual symbolism of their nation.

In this parable, the tenants (the vinedressers) represented the religious leaders among the Jewish people. The vinedressers did not buy the vineyard, and they did not make it. They were allowed to work it by a generous owner – yet they turned against the owner.

2. In what way or ways was Israel comparable to the vineyard?

3. In what way or ways was Israel comparable to the tenants (vinedressers)?

“What shall I do? I will send my beloved son”: The owner of the vineyard repeatedly tried to receive what was rightfully His from the vineyard and those who worked it. They rejected each of the three servants he sent to receive what was due to him, so finally he sent his beloved son, thinking “Probably they will respect him.” (Luke 20: 13-16)

Ultimately the owner decided to send his beloved son, in hopes that the tenants would respect him. However, the tenants saw this as an opportunity to kill the heir and seize the property for themselves. Jesus then asked what the owner of the vineyard would do to the evil tenants. It seems as if the answer would be obvious – the owner would kill the tenants and find others to manage it for him.

4. Why did the listeners respond, “Certainly not!” at the end of this parable?

It would appear the listeners understood this message full well. The vineyard was Israel, loved and cared for by God and responsible to bear fruit for Him. But Israel had mistreated God’s prophets and its current leaders were plotting to kill His Son. Jesus was conveying to them that an unbelieving Israel would not be allowed in the kingdom and the people they considered outcasts, the Gentiles, would be allowed to enter. This was unimaginable – they could not believe that God would revoke their privileges as the Jewish nation and hand it over to the Gentiles.

Luke 20:17-18 Jesus looked directly at them and asked, *“Then what is the meaning of that which is written: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone’? Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.”* (NIV)

Referring to Psalm 118:22 (“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;”), Jesus left the listeners hard-pressed to explain its meaning. Noting that the stone had destructive power-the listeners could choose not to believe that he was the Messiah, but they would suffer for their decision.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:4; 1 Peter 2:8; Daniel 2:45

“ Jesus is often likened unto a stone or a rock in the Bible. He is the rock of provision that followed Israel in the desert. He is the stone of stumbling. He is the stone cut without hands that crushes the kingdoms of this world.” (Joseph Flitzmyer/Marvin Pate)

The cornerstone is the stone that is essential or crucial to the whole structure-without it-the structure is unstable-the cornerstone bears the weight of the structure.

“Anyone who comes to Jesus will be broken of their pride and self-will, but those who refuse to come will be crushed by Christ in judgment.”(Marvin Pate)

5. What does “falling on the stone” mean and why was this passage so offensive to the religious leaders?

Luke 19-26 Paying Taxes to Caesar

By this time, the chief priests were furious with Jesus. They knew that his reference to the murdering tenants was a direct reference to them. They knew that Jesus had established his authority with his scriptural references, but they were hesitant to do anything at this time because the crowds would be in an uproar if they advanced on Him.

The priests tried to turn the crowds against Jesus by setting another trap. They wanted to show the crowds that Jesus would side with the Roman Government. The priests sent “spies” in an attempt to flatter Jesus. They referred to him as a wise and fair-minded teacher – did they forget that Jesus had stated earlier that he knew what was in their hearts? (Luke 5:22 - Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts?")

The spies weren’t interested in the truth, they just wanted to catch Jesus in a statement that would give them some type of leverage against him because the Jews had a divisive history with Caesar and his tax collectors.

“The Jews’ attitude toward paying taxes to the Roman authorities, whom they considered foreign conquerors, was different than their attitude about paying taxes to Persians and Greeks. At the beginning of Roman rule, they viewed taxes as theft and did not consider evasion of taxes to the Roman treasury to be a violation of their traditions. The people hated tax collectors. While collecting taxes, Roman soldiers always accompanied collectors. If people refused to pay or resisted, the soldiers burned their houses. Jews who collected imperial taxes were treated as apostates and despised.” (1/9/2023 Taxes: History and Modern Times)

Jesus’ response taught his followers to be respectful of government and to consider themselves as citizens of God’s kingdom – citizens who follow his rule of righteousness.

6. How can Jesus' teaching about "paying to Caesar what is Caesar's" apply to us in 2024? What attitude does Jesus teach us to have toward our government?

Luke 20: 27-40 Sadducees Ask About the Resurrection

The Sadducees did not believe in any form of life after death. "They were the conservative, aristocratic, high-priestly party, worldly minded and very ready to cooperate with the Romans, which, of course, enabled them to maintain their privileged position." (Leon Morris)

When the Sadducees posed their story of the wife and the brothers-in-law, Charles Spurgeon wrote that "this was one of the stock stories they were in the habit of telling in order to cast ridicule upon the resurrection."

The Sadducees were not really interested in an answer, just a way to trap Jesus with his response. Jesus reminded them that life after the resurrection would look very different from life as they knew it. There is no death in heaven, which means there would be no need to increase the population – husband and wife relationships would not be defined as it is on earth –(Matthew 19:5: *"For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh".*)

What did the Sadducees believe in? Why was Jesus such a challenge to their beliefs? Here is what we know about Sadducee theology: (<https://www.christianity.com/>)

- With special emphasis on the first five books of Moses (the Torah), they believed the Bible, our Old Testament, was the only authority on matters of faith and life.
- Sadducees flatly rejected the Pharisee teaching that oral tradition was equal to Scripture in authority.
- They believed in unrestrained free will—meaning God had no role in the personal lives of humans. Everyone was master of his or her own destiny.
- Sadducees rejected entirely the supernatural, refuting belief in angels, demons, heaven, hell, and resurrection. To their way of thinking "souls die with the bodies." The End.
- They believed strongly in ritual purity as prescribed by Moses. They did not want anything to disqualify them from "leading the temple services that generated income."

· Wealth seems to have been the number one “belief” of the Sadducees. Modern archaeologists have uncovered a few ancient Sadducee homes, describing them as “the most opulent discovered to date in Jerusalem.”

7. What parallels that we can make about the Sadducees and our current modern culture and how do these similarities make it challenging to share the gospel?

In verses 37-40, Jesus showed the Sadducees that God had identified himself as the “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” These patriarchs had died years before Moses, but God had clearly indicated that they were alive with Him. After Jesus made it clear to the Sadducees that those who love God and are loved by God would not cease to exist, they stopped asking questions.

Luke 20:41-44 Whose Son Is the Christ?

Quoting Psalm 110:1, Jesus challenged their thinking. How can the Messiah be the son of David when David called the Messiah, Lord? This was “outside the box” thinking – their beliefs were that the ancestor was always greater than the descendant – they could not react because they had to reconcile in their own minds that Jesus was both God (“the Lord”) and man (David’s descendant).

8. List a few scriptures from the Old Testament that foretold the coming of Jesus Christ.

Luke 20: 45-47 Beware of the Scribes

Read Ezra 7:6

Scribes in ancient Israel were learned men whose business was to study the Law, transcribe it, and write commentaries on it. The scribes took their job of preserving Scripture very seriously; they would copy and recopy the Bible meticulously, even counting letters and spaces to ensure each copy was correct. (<http://gotquestions.org>)

Read James 1:27; James 2:13, and James 3:16

Jesus warned his disciples about the scribes. They had drifted far from the mindset of Ezra. They even went as far as adding to God's Word. They had become arrogant, self-aggrandizing, conniving, money-grubbing individuals who sought only praise and power. The scribes had become more concerned about their appearance before man and before God.

9. How does the life of the scribe as described in Luke 45-47 differ from the life that a true disciple of Jesus Christ should live?

We have discussed in previous lessons that hypocrisy is not the same as taking a stand against sin. Hypocrisy was addressed in Isaiah 29:13 *"And so the Lord says, 'These people say they are mine. They honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. And their worship of me is nothing but man-made rules learned by rote.'" (NLT)* Hypocrisy has been a problem throughout the history of God's people.

Read 1 Peter 1:16, Romans 12:9, and James 1:22 & 25

10. Find a few verses that refer to, or address hypocrisy. How can we as believers avoid the sin of hypocrisy?

Jeremiah 29:11 says, *“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”*

Take some time this week to reflect on what plans God may have for you and how you might live that out in your life. God has a divine purpose for all of us – how will you honor Him this week and in the weeks to come?
