

# By What Authority?

## Questioning the King

Luke 20:1-21:2



### Old Testament Background – Personal Preparation

Jesus directly quotes from Psalm 118 twice in this section, and there are other echoes from the Psalm as well. The Psalm speaks of God's justice, and pictures a procession to the temple. Read the Psalm, and note especially verses 22, 25 and 26.

### The King Arrives at His Temple

**Read Luke 19:37-38, then 19:45-20:8.** Picture the scene. There's trouble in the temple, and it's not really surprising. Jesus has led a 'royal' procession into Jerusalem, and made his presence known by driving traders out of the temple courts, and then setting himself up as a teacher there. (See 19:44-47)

Can you imagine a modern parallel? This is like marching on Parliament House and inviting yourself to make a speech in the senate chamber. Try it - it won't be long til the security guards march you out!

### War of Words – Part 1

- a) From Luke 19:45-46, what strategy do the leaders of Israel adopt with Jesus, and what holds them back?
  
- b) Violence isn't going to work quite yet, so the scribes, priests and elders launch a 'war of words'. Who wins this 'first exchange' in v 2-8, and why?

Remember Malachi? He said that someone would come to prepare the way, then the Lord HIMSELF would come to his temple. It's significant that Jesus reminds them of John – because if they'd recognized him, they should KNOW who's coming next, and with what authority he came!

- c) Jesus fights back with a parable in **20:9-16**. Read it. Who is the vineyard owner, and who are the tenants?
  
- d) What point is Jesus making and how do the people react?
  
- e) Can you answer the question Jesus asks in verse 17?
  
- f) How do the teachers and priests react, and why so urgent now?

**Think it through...**

Jesus has just told the story of Israel's history, and exactly how things are going to unfold from here on. God sent the prophets to Israel with warnings time and time again. They were ignored and mistreated. Now God has sent his Son to Israel – and they're going to kill him. So now, the tenants are going to be overthrown, and the vineyard will be given to others. As in Psalm 110, the 'stone the builders rejected' has become the most important stone of all.

**War of Words - Part 2**

The teachers and priests continue keeping a "close watch" on Jesus, as they have been in previous chapters. Now they use spies in the crowd.

- a) What is their motive?
- b) How could the question about 'taxes to Caesar' help them make trouble between Jesus and the Roman governor? (Why does it look like a "no win" situation for Jesus?)
- c) How does Jesus turn the situation?
- d) In what way are the spies, teachers and priests not 'giving to God what is God's'? In what ways do you think you might fail to do this?

In spite of the fact they are unable to trap Jesus and are astonished by his answer, look ahead to 23:2. What happens?

For now though, it's on to the next attack.

**War of Words - Part 3**

It's time to bring in the heavy artillery. The Sadducees were at the other end of the religious and political spectrum to the Pharisees, are brought into the attack. **Read v27-40.**

- a) What is distinctive about the Sadducee's viewpoint? (Luke conveniently explains it so we'll 'get ' the next bit!)
- b) How is their question designed to show that the idea of resurrection is unworkable?
- c) How does Jesus demonstrate that their own Old Testament scriptures assume "life after life."
- d) Who wins? (v39-40)

### **Thinkspot - Why no marriage in the new age of resurrection of the dead?**

It seems a bit disappointing! But note that in biblical thinking, the primary purpose of marriage and sex is the procreation of children. And the reason you need children is to carry on your family line when you die. That was especially the case in the practice of "Levirite marriage" where it was the brother's duty to produce children with his sibling's widow and ensure the line continued. There are two reasons that won't be happening any more. There won't be death any more, and there won't be the birth of children either, for we will all be 'children of the resurrection.' But even if there won't be the need for the Jewish system of marriage to prolong a family line, or for reproduction, we can confidently expect there will still be loving relationships in the new age, without any of the pain those relationships can cause in this age!

### **A Puzzle and a Warning**

a) Jesus sets a puzzle for his listeners **in v41-44**. What's the puzzle?

b) Jesus gives two warnings in **v45-47**.

- In the first warning, Jesus tells his listeners to BEWARE. Who, or what of?
- There's also a warning FOR such people in v47. What is it?

List their crimes...

c) Notice, this section connects with the first few verses of chapter 21. In fact, it's all part of exactly the same theme. Who links v47 and 21v2?

d) We've been conditioned to read 21:1-4 as praise of the poor widow, who gives all that she has. But instead, it's a condemnation of the pompous teachers of the law, who process around in their expensive flowing robes, devouring widows houses and extracting every last cent from them. **Read Jeremiah 7:5-11**. Why is the way they treat **widows** so significant?

e) Did you notice Jeremiah 7:11 is exactly the verse Jesus quoted when he first came to the temple? These guys are in big trouble, and it's all because they are complacent. They think that God's temple gives them some kind of protection, and they can treat other people however they like. How should these words about justice and compassion challenge us? **Try to be practical.**

Pray together, repenting for any times you – or we as a church – might have been relying on 'religious impressiveness' and ignoring peoples needs.