

A Study of Luke's Gospel
Week Twenty-Eight
Luke 20:9-21:4

Day One

9 He went on to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time. 10 At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 11 He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed. 12 He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out. 13 "Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.' 14 "But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. 'This is the heir,' they said. 'Let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' 15 So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. "What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? 16 He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others." When the people heard this, they said, "May this never be!"

v. 9-16 – Jesus was trying desperately to warn the Jews that their day of “owning” God was coming to an end. There is a big difference between the attitude of an owner and steward. A steward tends something for an owner, and must maintain an attitude of faithfulness and strive for increase. An owner can do whatever he or she wants to what is owned; a steward doesn't have that freedom. The Jews began acting like owners, even though they were stewards. They worked to keep God, the true owner, out of their world and system.

The same can be true today. Christians don't own God. When I say “my” God, it doesn't mean that I own God. It means that I have identified with Him as my sovereign Lord and I am now His servant. At the same time, my God is also the God of the heathen—they just don't acknowledge His Lordship. Does this make sense? Do you agree? Why or why not?

Jesus warned the Jews that their behavior was going to disqualify them from their unique position with God, thus opening the way for Gentiles and a whole new system of leaders. The people knew what Jesus was saying and responded, “May it never be!” But they did not repent and what they decried became reality. The Jews had hoped that historical ethnic ties to Abraham would be enough to keep their position with God. It was not.

Day Two

17 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 capstone"? 18 Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls

will be crushed." 19 The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people.

v. 17 – I find this seeming insignificant detail to be important: “Jesus looked directly at them.” Jesus can get very specific and didn’t want the Jewish leaders to think He was talking about anyone else but them. Jesus, of course, was the stone that Israel would reject but He would become the cornerstone of God’s whole building, which is the Church. The decision that these leaders made to reject Jesus had implications for the whole nation of Israel. This indicates the tremendous responsibility that leaders have to lead well.

vs. 18&19 – For an explanation of what Jesus meant here, I would like to refer to what Adam Clarke wrote in his commentary:

This is an allusion to the punishment of stoning among the Jews. The place of stoning was twice as high as a man; while standing on this, one of the witnesses struck the culprit on the loins, so that he fell over this scaffold; if he died by the stroke and fall, well; if not, the other witness threw a stone upon his heart, and dispatched him. The stone thrown on the culprit was, in some cases, as much as two men could lift up.

He, whether Jew or Gentile, who shall not believe in the Son of God, shall suffer grievously in consequence; but on whomsoever the stone (Jesus Christ) falls in the way of judgment, he shall be ground to powder-it shall make him so small as to render him capable of being dispersed as chaff by the wind. This seems to allude, not only to the dreadful crushing of the Jewish state by the Romans, but also to that general dispersion of the Jews through all the nations of the world. This whole verse . . . seems to have been quoted from Isaiah 8:14-15. He shall be for a STONE OF STUMBLING, and for a ROCK OF OFFENCE to both the houses of Israel-and many among them shall STUMBLE and FALL, and be BROKEN (from Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by BibleSoft).

Day Three

20 Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be honest. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor. 21 So the spies questioned him: "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. 22 Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" 23 He saw through their duplicity and said to them, 24 "Show me a denarius. Whose portrait and inscription are on it?" 25 "Caesar's," they replied. He said to them, "Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." 26 They were unable to trap him in what he had said there in public. And astonished by his answer, they became silent.

v. 20 – John the Baptist was correct when he called the Jewish leaders a “brood of snakes.” Here we see that they sent men to spy on Jesus, all the while pretending to be honest. They truly didn’t know who they were dealing with! Or if they knew, they were convinced that they were smarter than Jesus, thus being smarter than God. What arrogance! What foolishness! What’s more, the wording implies that these spies were hired—the Pharisees didn’t hesitate to use God’s money for things that were ungodly. But they saw themselves as owners and not stewards and felt like they could do what they wanted, when they wanted and to whom they wanted. Later these same leaders would pay Judas to betray Jesus. No wonder God dismantled their whole religious system and removed them from power.

v. 21-26 – This is a famous story whose “punch line”—“Give to Caesar’s what is Caesar’s”—is quoted by many. Jesus deftly sidestepped the spies’ trap and gave a magnificent answer. It isn’t possible to fool God or trip Him up with tough questions. The spies were astonished by Jesus’ answer. God’s wisdom can take your breath away, even if you’re not looking for it, as these spies obviously were not.

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness (James 3:13-18).

Do you want God’s wisdom, or do you want man’s? I want God’s. I pray for wisdom, which we are commanded to do, and I study the book of Proverbs as one source of that wisdom. I wrote a daily devotional called *A Daily Dose of Proverbs*. You can order a copy by going to <http://www.purposequest.com/store.htm>.

Day Four

27 Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. 28 "Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother. 29 Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. 30 The second 31 and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. 32 Finally, the woman died too. 33 Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?" 34 Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. 35 But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, 36 and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since

they are children of the resurrection. 37 But in the account of the bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' 38 He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive." 39 Some of the teachers of the law responded, "Well said, teacher!" 40 And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

v. 27 – Who were the Sadducees? In some sense they were the religious liberals of their day, just as the Pharisees were the religious conservatives. Many of the Sadducees were priests, including the high priestly family, but they tended to be rich and part of the elite ruling class. They rejected the written tradition of the Pharisees and held to only what was written in the first five books of the Bible. Because they did not adhere to the written traditions, the Sadducees were the much harsher judges and critics, for they accepted none of the attempts to soften some of the written Law to make room for human frailties and “shades of gray.” These written traditions cause the Pharisees to be legalistic in one sense and less harsh in other areas where they excused laxness. The Sadducees would have none of that.

v. 28 – This gives us a good example of what we said about verse 27. The Pharisees had a whole volume that interpreted the commandment that a man should marry his brother's widow. The Sadducees had none of that and were really challenging the issue of the resurrection, in which they did not believe. But once again, these men did not fully understand with whom they were dealing. They were dealing with God! And God was about to answer their question with an endorsement of resurrection using the one of the first five books of the Bible that the Sadducees held to be so special.

vs. 29-40 – Jesus so spoke so authoritatively about the next life. He had to be more than a prophet as some maintain, for He spoke about things for which only God would have understanding. But in talking about these heavenly things, Jesus used tremendous insight into the Word as the basis for His explanation.

I desire that kind of insight into God's word. It is what I call creative insight that doesn't take liberties with the interpretation itself. To get this insight, you need to study and pray. There is no wrong way to study the Word; it is more important that you invest the time required to do the work. And your prayer needs to be the Psalmist's prayer:

Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law (Psalm 119:18).

In fact, Psalm 119 is a wonderful psalm to read and pray as you study the Word. Psalm 119 is in the exact middle of the Bible, and since it talks about the Word, shows that the Word is the pivotal point for man's service to God. I would recommend that you read Psalm 119, the longest psalm, with the view toward how that psalm can help you understand God's word.

When Jesus was finished, the Pharisees, who believed in the resurrection, applauded His response. The Sadducees shut up, for they had been undone in their attempt to trap Jesus. But notice that their position didn't change, even though Jesus had shown them the truth

from the Word. We must all be careful not to get so set in our views that they cannot be changed, even when we see truth we had never seen before. I am reevaluating a position I once held concerning giving. I am open to the fact that I misinterpreted some things in arriving at my conclusions. I don't want to fight to maintain what I believed; I want to be open to the truth, even if that means I have to change. Are you willing to have the Word shed light on your opinions and interpretations? Can you adjust your interpretations based on what you are seeing now? Or will you be like the Pharisees and Sadducees, who had to actually kill God to preserve their religious traditions?

I heard a pastor say that he no longer put his interpretations and theories in concrete. Rather he said he tacked them on a bulletin board. In that way they were easier to change and adjust. I think that is good advice.

Day Five

41 Then Jesus said to them, "How is it that they say the Christ is the Son of David? 42 David himself declares in the Book of Psalms: "The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand 43 until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." ' 44 David calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?"

v. 41 – After Jesus answered the question about the fictitious woman who married seven brothers, He went on to ask a question of His own. It is of note that the Pharisees and Sadducees had no response to the question. And of course, it was a matter of public record that Jesus was of the tribe of Judah and the house of David, so He qualified as Messiah by means of His bloodline. The Jewish leaders were so intent on proving that Jesus *wasn't* the Messiah that they looked past the evidence that He was. We are all susceptible to this tendency and that is to make up our mind so strongly that we ignore any evidence to the contrary.

vs. 42&43 – Jesus referred to Psalm 110:1 here, and this reference was attributed by the Jews to the coming Messiah. Yet they could not answer how the Messiah, who was born after David and thus his “son,” could also be His Lord. There is only one way: this “son” and Lord was alive, functioning as Lord before He became David’s son in the flesh. Don’t forget the context of this question that Jesus posed. He had just answered the Sadducees question about the resurrection and said, “He is not the God of the dead but of the living.” And of course, He could only be the God of the living if He were alive and preexisted His creation.

v. 44 – It seems to me like Jesus is regaining the upper hand here, so to speak. The Sadducees saw themselves as experts in the first five books, as well as the Psalms and Proverbs. They were interrogating God to prove their limited, paltry perspective of Scripture. Now Jesus was turning the tables. Since they had tried to stump Him, He was now going to stump them.

We should be asking God questions about the meaning of Scripture, not from a perspective that we already know, but that we need Him to teach us. The Sadducees were

so arrogant that they thought they knew more than God about His word. Jesus was establishing His supremacy over the Word that the Jews thought they owned and protected.

I want more insight from the Bible. I don't want to see things that aren't there, but I do want God to show me more than I see today. I don't want to bend and twist God's word, but I do want to build on what I know today so that I can know more tomorrow. I want to grow in my grasp of His word and how to apply it. Will you join me in this pursuit? I assume you will or you wouldn't be reading today's devotional. May the Lord help and enlighten us in our studies.

Day Six

45 While all the people were listening, Jesus said to his disciples, 46 "Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. 47 They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely."

v. 45 – Jesus turned from the people and addressed His followers. There are things that Jesus only said to His followers. While I believe that God is speaking to many, He is only giving revelation to His followers, since they are the only ones with the Spirit who are able to understand what He is saying. As a pastor, my favorite question to anyone from my church with whom I met was, “What’s the Lord saying to you?” I wanted them to summarize what they were learning and seeing from God’s word and their experiences as they followed Him.

v. 46 – Jesus warned the disciples to beware of the teachers of the law. In so many words, He was telling them not only to avoid them, but to not be like those teachers of the law. Contrast these teachers with Jesus. Jesus did not walk around to be seen and honored. Peter wrote:

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away (1 Peter 5:2-4).

Peter wrote to shepherds about how to behave, because He saw the Shepherd behave in that manner. Oh that today's shepherds would read these verses and take them to heart, for we in many cases have another group of professional leaders who crave honor, money, respect and positions of authority. They dress in distinctive garb so that they can stand above the people they are called to serve. I have said in many places that Jesus is coming back for His church—now! He wants it back today from every leader who has commandeered it for his own purposes to impose his agenda rather than God's.

Leadership shouldn't be a means of great gain, but rather a means of great service. The people don't exist for the leaders' sake; it is the other way around. The leaders exist for the people.

In the Old Testament, the Levites or priests were the only tribe who did not receive any of the Promised Land as an inheritance. Why?

The LORD said to Aaron, "You will have no inheritance in their land, nor will you have any share among them; I am your share and your inheritance among the Israelites (Numbers 18:20).

The leaders were to trust the Lord for their provision, coming to recognize that the Lord was their provision. While the other tribes received land, the Levites received the presence of God. Yet the tendency was for the leaders to try and amass great wealth and possessions, using their position as a means to gain.

v. 47 – The leaders were somehow preying on widows to enrich their personal fortune. This was particularly heinous to God. God's leaders must protect the weak, not plunder them. They must practice spirituality, not use it as a shield to hide their underhanded activities. I have learned that the ability to sound spiritual isn't necessarily the same as being spiritual, especially where a leader is concerned. I have often prayed, "Lord, don't let me get professional." I don't want to learn how to do ministry, I want to minister. Do you understand the difference?

Day Seven

21:1 As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. 2 He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 3 "I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. 4 All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

v. 1 – Jesus was very attentive. He didn't miss a thing that was happening around him. You remember that He felt power go out of him when a woman touched Him for healing, even though the crowd was pressing Him (see Luke 8:45). Then Jesus always knew what was in the hearts of those who were around Him, even those who were smiling outwardly but had evil thoughts toward Him in their hearts. Now Jesus observed the people giving their gifts in the Temple. God is still observing His people, looking for those who are committed to Him and His will.

For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him (2 Chronicles 16:9).

v. 2 – All the people gave these small copper coins to the Temple treasury, even the very rich. The rich probably poured large amounts of copper into the container, so it was easy to notice (if one was paying attention) this widow putting in only what she had in her

hand. It would have been easy to miss this simple act, for it was almost beyond notice and wouldn't have made any noise as the two coins joined the large quantify already given. But Jesus saw it and Jesus sees what you give as well.

v. 3 – Jesus said, “I tell you the truth.” How often Jesus said that (nine times in Luke alone)! What else could He say, for He was the truth? Yet what He said seemed so out of the ordinary that He had to convince people He was really telling the truth. Why is that? Because men believe so many lies that when they hear the truth it seems bizarre!

Jesus went on to truthfully say that this widow had given more than all before her. That did sound strange, for others were pouring in large amounts while she put in two small coins. Someone once said that God doesn't evaluate the size of what you gave, but rather what you have left after you give. The rich still had plenty after they had given, while this woman had nothing. Thus her offering was given special notice from God.

God knows what you have, as well as what you've given. If you have nothing, God is aware and will take care of you. It is hard to give all that you have. Just having a dollar in your pocket can make you feel like you have something. To give it all and trust God is an act of supreme trust.

v. 4 – I wish I knew the rest of this story. I would like to think that God supernaturally provided for this woman who gave everything she had. I would love to know how God blessed her and what He gave her in return for her generosity and faith. But in some sense, she received a greater reward than just money in return. Jesus pointed out what she did for all the Church to read down through the centuries. While we don't know this woman, she is famous! Her legacy of giving has impacted many people through the centuries.

That day when she came to the Temple, she thought she was giving two coins—all that she had to live on. Instead she received honor from the Lord. I would like to imagine that she came to know Jesus and she will be pointed out to us when we get to heaven.

What you do today may seem insignificant to you, but if it is done in faith and a generous spirit, be sure that God notices. If you do wrong, even if it is a small thing, rest assured that God is watching that as well. Take to heart today what the writer of Hebrews wrote:

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account (Hebrews 4:13).

Amen.