

Luke Study 13 - The King Enters Jerusalem

19:45-21:4

Introduction

Jesus has been travelling to Jerusalem since 9:51: ‘*As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.*’ As he’s been heading there, it’s become clear he won’t be welcomed when he arrives. The Jewish leaders have become hostile toward him and Jesus has predicted they will hand him over to the Gentiles to be killed (18:32-33). Jerusalem, the core of Israelite life, has become corrupt. So when Jesus finally gets to the city, where does he go first? The temple, the core of Jerusalem. If this were a film about a disaster at a nuclear reactor, this is where the hero, right at the end, enters the core. And what does he find? It’s in meltdown. The thing that is meant to be making light and energy for the whole nation - the whole world - is actually in meltdown. So what will the hero do? Shut it down.

Read 19:45-48

1. What are people doing in the temple courts?
2. How does Jesus react? Why?
3. What does Jesus do every day from then on in the temple? How do the leaders react? The people?

People are selling in the temple courts. But Jesus condemns them. The place that is meant to be a place of prayer has become a place to make and take money. It has become corrupt. So from then on, Jesus spends every day teaching in the temple. The people ‘hang on his words.’ But the Jewish leaders, threatened by Jesus’ authority, plot to kill him. The rest of this section is all about those attempts and how Jesus thwarts them.

Luke 19:45-21:4 is a conceptual unity, so we should look at it in one go. However, it’s also too big to cover each part of it in one study. So, look at **one** of the following passages.

Read 20:1-19

- What do the Jewish leaders ask Jesus?
- How does he respond? How does it neutralise the leaders’ attack?
- Jesus then goes on to tell a parable.
 - Who do you think the following characters stand for?
 - The owner

- The tenants
- The servants
- The son
- How does the parable end?
- What do you think its overall point is?

As Jesus is teaching in the temple, the Jewish leaders ask him directly: by what authority is he doing this? Jesus evades the question by asking them a question: by whose authority did John the Baptist carry out his ministry? The leaders say they don't know. So, since the leaders won't answer his question about authority, Jesus refuses to answer their question about authority. He goes on to tell a parable against them. Like the servants in the parable, Israel's leaders have hijacked the nation they're meant to serve and rebelled against its master. They will even kill the master's son, Jesus. By what authority does Jesus teach in the temple? God's authority! He is his son! And yet they will kill him in an attempt to keep the people for themselves. Jesus' message is clear: they won't get away with this, but will be punished.

What lessons are there here for us about the dangers of human religious authority when it becomes separated from God's authority?

Read 20:20-26

- Who asks Jesus the question? Why?
- What question do they ask him?
- Why might this be tricky for Jesus to answer? What might be the consequences of him answering either 'Yes' or 'No'?
- How does Jesus answer the question? How does it neutralise the leaders' attack?
- What do you think it means for the way we treat secular government?

Having confronted Jesus directly (20:1-8), the Jewish leaders now send spies to catch him covertly. They do it by asking him a question about Roman taxation: should Jewish people pay it or not? It's a tricky question for Jesus to answer. If he says, 'Yes, we should pay,' he will look like a traitor and lose the support of the people (the one thing keeping the leaders from killing him: 20:19). But if he says, 'No, we shouldn't pay,' then he will get into trouble with the Romans, who will do the leaders' dirty work for them. So what does Jesus do? In a stroke of genius, Jesus takes a Roman coin and asks the spies who it

belongs to. ‘Caesar,’ they say. ‘So,’ Jesus replies, ‘Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.’ That is, the leaders think obedience to God or government is an ‘either/or.’ But Jesus says it is a ‘both/and.’ We can, and should, serve both God and the government he has put in place to govern us.

What lessons are there here for us about our responsibilities in all parts of life not just the ‘religious’ parts?

Read 20:27-40

- The Sadducees put a conundrum to Jesus. What is it?
- Why do you think they are asking it?
- Jesus answers in two stages. What does he say in both?
 - 20:34-36
 - 20:37-38
- What is the result of this last encounter? (20:39-40)

Another group of Jewish leaders - this time, the Sadducees - put another question to Jesus: if a woman has multiple husbands in this life, whose wife will she be in the next life? And doesn’t this pose a problem, as you’re only meant to be married to one person at a time? Of course, it’s not a real question: the Sadducees don’t believe in the resurrection (20:27), so aren’t really worried about the answer. Rather, they’re trying to undermine the idea of the resurrection by making it look ridiculous. Jesus answers in two ways. Firstly, he doesn’t accept the premise of their question. The Sadducees assume there will be marriage in the resurrection age, but there won’t (20:34-36). Second - and this is the real issue - the Bible really does teach the resurrection of the dead (20:37-38). What they thought was a clever trap becomes an expose of their theological bankruptcy and hopelessness. After that, no one dares to ask Jesus any more questions.

What’s one thing this episode teaches us about marriage, singleness, and the life to come? What are the implications of this for life now?

Read 20:41-44

4. What question does Jesus ask the Jewish leaders?
5. What is the issue Jesus is getting at here?

Having been questioned, Jesus now turns the tables and ask the leaders a question: how can the Messiah be both David's *descendant* (and so in some way inferior to him) but also his *lord* (and so superior to him)? In context, the question isn't just academic. Jesus - the 'son of David' (18:38) - has looked weak, inferior. He is about to look even weaker: he is going to die on the cross for sin. But it is exactly this death that will lead to his exaltation: he is going to Jerusalem '*to be taken up to heaven*' (9:51). The one who is David's son - both by physical descent and by looking weak - will one day become David's lord by being raised to life. At the start of this section the leaders had asked, 'By whose authority are you doing these things?' (20:2). At the end of this section, Jesus now answers: by the authority of God, at whose right hand I will one day sit.

Read 20:45-21:4

6. What does Jesus tell the people about the Jewish leaders?
7. What does he tell them about the widow and her offering?
8. How is the widow a contrast to the leaders and everything that's been going on in the temple?

Having evaded all their traps and answered their big question - in whose authority does Jesus come? - there is nothing left for Jesus to do to the leaders than tell the people who they really are: selfish hypocrites (20:45-47). But there is still hope for God's people, even if it's not with their leaders. There are Israelites who still want to serve God, even to the point of giving their last two coins (21:1-4). A scene that began with people *taking* money in the temple ends with a person *giving* money in the temple. There is still hope for Israel. Some will accept the good news Jesus has come to preach. But first, he must face the wrath of their leaders.