

# Confrontation in the temple Luke 19v45-20v19

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[ 0 : 00 ] Luke 19, verse 45. When Jesus entered the temple courts, he began to drive out those who were selling. It is written, he said to them, my house will be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers.

Every day he was teaching at the temple, but the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words.

One day as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple courts and proclaiming the good news, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, together with the elders, came up to him. Tell us, by what authority you are doing these things, they said.

Who gave you this authority? He replied, I will also ask you a question. Tell me, John's baptism, was it from heaven or of human origin?

They discussed it among themselves and said, well, if we say from heaven, he will ask, why didn't you believe him? But if we say it's of human origin, all the people will stone us, because they are persuaded that John was a prophet.

[ 1 : 29 ] So they answered, we don't know where it was from. Jesus said, neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

He went on to tell the people this parable. A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers, went away for a long time. 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. He sent another servant, but that one they also beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed.

He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out. Then the owner of the vineyard said, what shall I do? I will send my son whom I love.

Perhaps they will respect him. 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.

[ 2 : 29 ] So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.

When the people heard this, they said, God forbid. 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.

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. Well, let's pray together. Father, help us to have a mind that, as it were, takes us into the operating theatre.

[ 3 : 45 ] Father, to come before you and ask that by your word and by your Holy Spirit, you would cut us open.

Show us what we are like. Show us who you are. Father, we submit to you.

And pray that you would do your careful, skillful work on our hearts and lives today. In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, this is the last week of Jesus' life.

As we move into chapter 20, it's four days' time before Jesus dies, when he will be executed on a wooden cross.

[ 5 : 05 ] After all, that's why Jesus came to Jerusalem. He came to die. But instead of keeping a low profile, perhaps spending the last few days with family and friends, Jesus heads straight for the temple.

Chapter 20, verse 1. One day as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple courts and proclaiming the good news. The temple was the centre and focus of all religious and social life. It was also the home to what was called the Sanhedrin, which was a powerful ruling council made up of about 70 people.

Although Sanhedrin isn't mentioned, the makeup of that ruling council is at the end of verse 1, where we read about the chief priests, the teachers of the law, together with the elders. They were responsible for overseeing all religious and social affairs. They were the rulers, the ones who held authority.

[ 6 : 19 ] They were like the church, the police, the law courts, all rolled into one. Get on the wrong side of the Sanhedrin and you could lose your life.

Their word was final. But then if you remember from last week, Jesus has just arrived in Jerusalem and here he is claiming to be king.

That he is the one who has supreme authority and that all people are answerable to him. That his word is final.

And Jesus goes straight to the temple, the most public place, and confronts the Sanhedrin, this ruling council, on their home turf.

This was a clash of authority. Now as we follow Jesus into the temple courts, we want to also see that Jesus is there confronting us.

[ 7 : 28 ] Two big things we're going to look at this morning. First, Jesus confronts us with his authority. Two ways Jesus does this.

First, through his word. Let's pick it up again. Chapter 20, verse 1. One day as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple courts and proclaiming the good news, the chief priests, the teachers of the law, together with the elders, that's the Sanhedrin, the ruling council, came up to him.

Tell us, by what authority you are doing these things, they said. Who gave you this authority? They were concerned about the things Jesus was doing in the temple.

Well, what was Jesus doing in the temple? What were they so concerned about? Well, back up to chapter 19, verse 45. When Jesus entered the temple courts, he began to drive out those who were selling.

Again, if you remember from last week, we learned it was Passover time. Thousands, tens of thousands of people are making their way to Jerusalem, to the temple.

[ 8 : 45 ] And as they arrived, they would go, if they didn't have a sacrifice with them, they would have to buy an animal for sacrifice. But to buy, you had to have the right currency, the right kind of money.

So those who had come from outside Jerusalem, first had to go and exchange their money. Get the right kind of currency, and then they could buy an animal for sacrifice.

The problem was, the temple officials, which was overseen by the Sanhedrin, this ruling council, had it all fixed in their favour. It was a way of making lots and lots of money.

So Jesus confronts them head on with the authority of his word. Verse 46. It is written, he said to them, my house will be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers.

Look at what Jesus says at the beginning there. He says, my house will be a house of prayer. Jesus is quoting here from Isaiah the prophet, who was looking forward to a day when all people, regardless of their race and religion, would be welcomed to come to God.

[ 10 : 05 ] That has been the ministry of Jesus all the way through Luke, isn't it? He's been welcoming outsiders. Here's more of what Isaiah said in Isaiah 56, where this quote comes from.

And foreigners, outsiders, who bind themselves to the Lord, who trust in the Lord, these are the people I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer.

This is why Jesus had come to welcome people in. But he has to confront these religious authorities. You're actually hindering people from coming.

Look at the rest of verse 46. You've made it a den of robbers. This time, Jesus is quoting from Jeremiah the prophet, who is calling on the people to repent and turn around to God.

Here's what Jeremiah said. You can follow the quote on the screen. This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says, reform your ways and your actions.

[ 11 : 16 ] Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and follow other gods you have not known, and then come to me and say, we are safe, safe to do these detestable things?

Has this house, referring to the temple, which bears my name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching, declares the Lord.

You see, Jesus is coming, confronting with the authority of his word. He speaks God's word, the words of the prophets, as if it was his very own word.

And Jesus is saying to the people, you need to get in line with my word. You need to listen to me. reform your ways, repent, get on board with what I am doing, with my mission.

So Jesus confronts, firstly, by his word, and second, he confronts us with his authority through his identity. Chapter 20, verse 2.

[12:27] Tell us, they said, by what authority you are doing these things, they said. Who gave you this authority? What right have you to be coming into our temple, telling us to reform and to change our lives?

Who do you think you are? You're no member of the Sanhedrin. Where did you come from? Well, Jesus answers them in a strange way. It's really an expression, again, of his authority.

Verse 3. He replied, well, I will also ask you a question. You have to answer me. Tell me, verse 4, John's baptism, was it from heaven or of human origin?

If you remember back in Luke chapter 3 where we first met John the Baptist, he was baptizing people and as he baptized people, he was pointing people to Jesus and preparing people for Jesus. His message was crystal clear. John was saying, I'm not the Messiah, it's not me. Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is God's chosen king and you need to be ready to meet him.

[13:42] Verse 5. So they discussed it amongst themselves and if we say, well, look, if we say that what John was saying was from heaven, then he's going to ask us, why didn't we believe John the Baptist?

Why didn't we trust that Jesus is the Messiah? We don't want to do that. But, verse 6, what if we say, well, what John was saying is of human origin, it's all made up and Jesus really isn't the Messiah.

Well, all the people are going to stone us and, I mean, look at all the stones around here. We're going to be in trouble because they were persuaded, the people knew that John was a prophet and he spoke the truth.

So they chickened out, didn't they, verse 7? Oh, well, you know, we don't know where it was from, taking no sides other than to protect themselves.

Well, Jesus said, verse 8, neither will I tell you by what authority I'm doing these things. You see, they do know what the correct answer is. They just don't want to admit to it.

[14:54] Jesus is the Messiah. He is their King. You see, while the Sanhedrin love to maintain this control and authority over the people and telling people who could come and who had to stay out, well, isn't that a little bit like us?

We like to control our own lives. I am the ruler. I am the authority. I decide what is best for me and my life.

None of us likes any one of us telling us what to do. It's my life and I will do as I please. But if Jesus is the Messiah, that means he has supreme authority over us and the way that authority is expressed to us is through his words.

You see, we can't claim to be followers of Jesus and not listen to his word. You can't have Jesus and ignore his word.

To accept Jesus as the Messiah means we must submit to what he has to say. And that implies that we are the kind of people who are spending time reading his word and applying it to our life.

[16:19] To go from week to week without even opening our Bibles is to say to Jesus, Jesus, keep your mouth shut. I don't want to hear anymore.

Because to close our Bibles is to close our ears to what Jesus has to say. And to close our ears to what Jesus has to say is to shut Jesus out of our life.

The point is so simple. We can't have Jesus without his word. And the evidence that we accept Jesus is that we welcome his word into our lives.

Look back at verse 47. Look at the different responses of the people. Sorry, chapter 19, verse 47. Every day Jesus was teaching at the temple.

But the chief priest, the teachers of the law and the leaders, that's that council again, among the people were trying to kill him, silence him.

[17:22] They didn't want to hear his voice. Yet they could not find a way to do it because all the people hung on his words. Which one best describes you?

Do we want to silence Jesus? Or are we hanging on his every word, listening to what he has to say?

You see, we can come every Sunday, read the Bible, listen to the Bible being taught. We can tick that little religious box and we can be like the people in Jeremiah's time who said, do you remember?

We are safe. They do their little bit of worship and kind of safe within the walls of the temple. God's not going to do anything to us.

We're his people. We're good religious people. No, says Jesus, stop hiding behind that veneer of religiosity. Reform your ways.

[18:24] Get in line with my word. For I am your king. So first, Jesus confronts us with his authority.

Second, here's the second big idea, Jesus confronts us with our response to his authority. He confronts us with our response to his authority.

Look down at verse 9. He went on to tell the people this parable. Now, you'd imagine, you know, he's come into the temple grounds. This is the home turf for the Sanhedrin.

They're the rulers. They're the ones in authority. They have the power. They're trying to kill him. You would think Jesus would kind of like back off a little bit at this stage. But no, he goes right for the jugular.

Look down at verse 19. Here we get the conclusion of the parable. 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.

[19:34] Jesus is confronting full on. He's not backing off. So what do we learn from this parable? Well, first, fruitful obedience.

Let's read verse 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.

Now, when we read about the vineyard, it's a picture, it's picture language for God's people. So let me show you. If you go back to Isaiah chapter 5, so keep your finger in Luke 20 and jump all the way back to Isaiah chapter 5.

So as Jesus starts talking about vineyard, it brings with us a certain picture and image.

Isaiah chapter 5 and verse 1. Isaiah 5 verse 1.

[20:53] So here it is. It's really speaking about God's people. He says, I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard. My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside.

He dug it up, cleared it of stones, planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watch tower in it and cut out a wine press as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes.

but it yielded only bad fruit. Down to verse 7. The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the nation of Israel, the people of Judah, and the vines he delighted in.

And he looked for justice but saw bloodshed, for righteousness but heard cries of distress. Now let's go back to Luke 20, back to the parable.

You see, God, just as the time in Isaiah was looking for fruitful obedience. People who would listen to the words of the prophets, those who would obey it, those who would take God's word on board, and would be changed, the fruit of obedience.

[22:10] Chapter 20, verse 10. So 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.

Three times the owner sends his servants, and each time they're rejected. And Jesus' point is clear to them. Look, God has been so patient and persistent with you.

He has spoken his word to you through his servants, the prophets, time after time after time. People like Isaiah, people like Jeremiah, people like Elijah, they've come time after time.

But you will not listen to what God has to say. And to drive the point home, Jesus makes it very personal. Verse 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. But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over.

[ 23 : 16 ] This is the heir, they said. Let's kill him and the inheritance will be ours. So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

You see, Jesus, as he speaks this parable, is making it quite clear that he is the ultimate prophet. He is the very word of God.

He is God's king. I am here to speak God's word to you, and I am giving you time to repent, to change of your ways. But rather than accept my authority and listen to me, you will kill me.

God is so patient, so persistent, longing for fruitful obedience from his people.

But if we fail to respond, if we fail to take his word on board and get in line with his vision, we will face his judgment.

[ 24 : 26 ] judgment. So the second thing we learn from this parable is divine judgment. Let's pick it up at the end of verse 15.

What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.

It's so clear, isn't it? If you continue to ignore my authority, if you persist in closing your ears to my word, then God will ignore you and close his ears to you.

Verse 16. He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. The opportunity that you have been given is going to be taken away and is going to be given to someone else.

Taken away from those whom God had called, said you will be my people. Of course, those who are his people, the evidence, are those who accept the son.

[ 25 : 36 ] who welcome his word. You see, we might have had a lifetime of being taught God's word. We might have scripture memorized.

We could have been raised in a Christian home where we had parents who taught us, had the privilege of being in a good church family. All signs of God's amazing grace, his desire and longing that we love him and obey him.

But yet, as the years have gone by, it's as if our hearts have become more calloused and more hardened to God's word.

I used to read God's word, but now I have no time. I used to listen to the sermon and engage, but well now I can't wait for it to be over.

I used to enjoy the challenge of what other people had to say and the intimacy of meeting God in his word, but not for me.

[ 26 : 47 ] Slowly but subtly, the rejection of God's authority in our life. Well, if that's you this morning, listen very carefully.

God's persistence and patience will one day come to an end. The opportunities that we have been given will be taken away, will be given to someone else.

The point was not lost on his hearers. Look at the end of verse 16. When the people heard this, they said, God forbid. Oh, that would never ever happen to me.

I would never ever ignore God's word. Not me. It's a sobering thought. Jesus confronts us with our response to his authority.

So, what what is my response to the authority of Jesus? What is our response?

[ 28 : 01 ] This is deeply personal. Look at verse 17. Jesus looked directly at them. It's like he's eyeballed them, staring intently.

A dramatic pause. Nobody's speaking. They're just looking at each other. This was pointed and personal. Jesus demands a response. He asked them, then what is the meaning of that which is written?

The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. Well, we need to do some thinking here.

The imagery has changed, hasn't it? We've gone from the vineyard and now we're in a construction site. But Jesus wants us to make a connection between the two.

The stone that we read about here in the parable is also like the sun in the parable. Both have been rejected. Back at verse 15, the sun is thrown out and killed.

[ 29 : 07 ] He's rejected. The stone in verse 17, well, the builders have rejected that. But just as the stone, verse 17, becomes the cornerstone, the cornerstone was that big foundation stone on which everything is built on and holds everything together.

It's the most important stone. Remove that stone and there's nothing. Well, he was saying, so the sun has become the foundation, the most important one.

And in case we're missing the point, Jesus is saying, listen, I am that sun and I am that stone. You may reject me, you may throw me out, you may kill me, and in four days time, Jesus will be killed, executed on the cross with the Sanhedrin at the heart of it.

But I will rise again. I will rise again. You may discard me, you may have no use for me, you may choose another foundation to build your life upon, but mark this, I am that cornerstone to build your life on the authority of my word and you will be saved.

[ 30 : 36 ] But reject my authority and my word, it will be like removing that foundation, that cornerstone and it will come toppling down with a crash.

Verse 18, everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces. Anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.

Jesus will have the last word. His authority reigns supreme. And one day we will all have to stand before the risen Jesus and give an account of our life to him.

Nobody else but us and him. There is only one authority, only one true word and that is Jesus the Messiah.

You cannot split Jesus and his words. You cannot say, oh I like Jesus but shut my ears to what he says.

[ 31 : 42 ] Submit to his word and you will live. You will know life. You will enjoy life the way it is meant to. Reject his word and you will be crushed.

There is just one authority. What is our response to him today? As we close, we are going to pray. I would like us to turn to those words in Hebrews that we read at the beginning. Hebrews chapter 4, we are going to use it as our prayer as we close.

Hebrews chapter 4. If somebody could help me again with a page number that would be helpful.

Hebrews chapter 4, verse 12.

So as we read it, let us hear God speak to us and ask him to do an effective work in our life and that it might lead us to run to Jesus.

[ 33 : 10 ] Chapter 4, verse 12. For the word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow.

it judges the thoughts and attitudes of my heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered, laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.

Verse 16. Let us then approach God's throne of grace, with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

There's pain in being cut open but there is great healing as we come to Jesus, the true word, who fills our life with grace and mercy.

What a king. Let us pray. Father, thank you for your word to us today.

[ 34 : 43 ] We recognize that it is hard, it is painful. we submit ourselves to you afresh and pray that you would give us open hearts and open ears to your word, to the Lord Jesus, and accept his authority in our lives.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We're going to sing, which is another prayer, and a way to encourage us as we sing this, we sing to each other, as we pray to God, that as we go into this week, that we don't just close the Bible over, close our ears to the Lord, but go into this week wanting to hear from him and to live our lives as followers of him.

Speak, O Lord, as we come to you to receive the food of your holy word. Let's stand as we sing.