

Jesus Put to the Test

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn again to the chapter we read in Luke's Gospel, Luke chapter 20. And reading from verse 19, or considering this section, from verse 19 onwards.

Again, I'm not going to read it all, but we find here from verse 19 that the scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at every hour, for they perceived that he had told this parable against them, but they feared the people, so they watched him and sent spies who pretended to be sincere, that they might catch him in something, he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor, and so on.

Now it's very obvious here, as Jesus has come into Jerusalem, that the enemies of Jesus are beginning to close in on him. You can get this sense of a moving in and in bit by bit, and they were becoming more and more and more determined to get rid of him.

But they faced a problem because the people held Jesus in the highest esteem, and he was an immensely popular person amongst the ordinary folk.

And so the rulers faced a real dilemma. They couldn't publicly just go and take him, because they knew there would be an outcry.

[1 : 2 9] They feared they'd be stoned. So they were trying to hatch every conceivable plot, every way, so that there would be some way that they could get Jesus, and that they could hold out their hands and say, well, it's not our fault, see, we had to take him because of what he did or what he said.

So they got some spies, people who, not themselves, but people that they got there, who were pretending to be genuine and sincere, but they were not.

They weren't for Jesus, they were against him. But Jesus tells us there that he perceived their craftiness. He saw right through them. And, you know, sometimes, it's not always the case, but often the Lord's people are given a spirit of discernment, and there are times that the Christian will find that, that that spirit of discernment is given, where they're able to assess quite quickly whether something is real or not, whether it's genuine or not.

That's not always the case, but sometimes it is. However, the Lord was able, he knew, and was able to read their hearts. And so they came with what they thought was the perfect question.

And actually, it's quite a brilliant question in many ways, because they reckoned that either way, whichever way that Jesus answered it, they were going to get him. If Jesus was to say, with regard to this, no, don't, you see, the question, the question they ask is, it's a very, it's very clever.

[3 : 0 6] Because, you see, if Jesus was to say something against Rome, and Rome, of course, remember, was a nation that had the authority and the rule in the land of Palestine at that time, if Jesus was to say something derogatory against Rome, or to put down on Rome, they would say, got him.

And straight away, they would go to the Roman authorities, and they would say, look, this man is guilty of treason. He's been putting down on Rome. So that's why they ask this to them.

They were trying to make out a very innocent question. But they say, they ask, is it lawful for us to give tribute or to give tax to Caesar or not? Now, of course, we know that the Jews resented having the Roman rule and authority in the land.

But the question is very clever. Because if Jesus supports Rome, then people will straight away question his allegiance to the Jewish people.

And they'll say, ah, he's not really one of us. He's a sympathizer with Rome. And they would begin to turn the people away from Jesus. Because they say, we'll get him that way.

[4 : 2 3] Because if he sides with Rome, we will say to the people, look, he's not really for you. He claims to be. But he's actually, he's on the side of Rome.

But if he sides with the Jews and says, no, don't pay tax, don't pay tribute to Caesar, straight away they will go, and they will say to the Roman authorities, this man is guilty of treason. So either way, it seemed that they had, that they had, like as if they had caught Jesus in a vice, they were persuaded. We've got the perfect question. There's no way out. And so they come and they're sort of, they say to him, teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly and show no partiality. You know, in fact, their language there is nauseating. Because you would think that they were, they were so taken up with Jesus and they so admired. And in fact, underneath, they just, they despised him.

[5 : 25] And so it's just, it's two-facedness at its very worst, hypocrisy at its very worst. But Jesus, who knows what they're about, and when he's asked this question, is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?

He said, show me a denarius, show me a coin. And you can imagine almost straight away the one who asked the question in the pocket and taking out and handing this denarius's coin over to Jesus. And when you would look at that coin, Roman sovereignty would be stamped all over it. I think it would be something like Tiberius Caesar, Augustus, son of the divine Augustus, would be written on it, just in the same way that we have writing on our own coins.

And it would have, no doubt, the inscription would have, no doubt, a picture of Caesar on it or something like that. Now, the man who asked the question or the people who asked the question are quite happy to use these coins.

So they had them at the ready and hands it over to Jesus. Jesus, very cleverly, he said to them, well, you give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar.

[6 : 35] And give to God the things that are God's. It's a very simple answer. But it's an incredibly profound answer. And Jesus is saying here, governments have a right to exist.

And we have an obligation to pay for the privileges and for the provision that government and society provides for us. It is only right.

And that's the same down to this day. We pay for the services and the provision, whether it's at a local level or at a national level, these things, this is part of what we do.

And sometimes we may be incensed about things governments do and governments say and sometimes laws that are passed. But the thing is, at the end of the day, the government is set there and there has to be a recognition in our heart because it is a genuine, a real appointment.

And we've got to realize that the Christian, and I think the Lord is showing this, that we have to give to the government, we have to give to those in authority what they demand, what the law sets out for us.

[7 : 53] And we are actually required to obey the law unless, of course, the law was to come into conflict with God's word.

For instance, if the law, if it came to the point where the law said, you are not, you can believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you can believe privately.

It's like the privatization of Christianity where it becomes a private thing. And that's what some would actually like our nation to move to.

But you're not allowed to push it or to proclaim it. If it ever came to that point, then we would have to live in defiance of the law because the law would be going against the Bible which tells us to proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Savior of sinners.

And we need to pray. This is why it's so important for God's people to be praying about government and about those in rule and in authority over us. The Bible tells us that we're to do so.

[8 : 59] It doesn't say that the Christians should take a back seat and ignore these things. We're told very explicitly that we're to pray for kings and for those who are in rule and authority over us.

We're to pray for them. And you know, if God's people really take this seriously, it's in order that we may live quiet and peaceable and godly lives in order that the government will indeed strengthen the Christian's hand within society.

So there has to be a recognition that government has its place and that as far as is at all possible and in most cases it will be possible that we adhere to the laws that are set out for us.

But also, there has to be a recognition of God in all things and we have to give to God what belongs to him. And indeed, we see here how really that should influence all society.

So, Jesus' answer really stumps them and they can't get over it and we find that they marveled at this answer and they became silent. And then in verse 27, along come this other group, the

Sadducees.

[10:14] And these are people who, they were very much materialists. They were the kind of people who, like a lot of people today, who live for this world. This world, that's it.

There is nothing after. There is no resurrection. That's it. It's the end. They live for this life and they put everything into this life with no thought of after. And that's kind of what the Sadducees were like. Why they believed, they adhered to the first five books of the Bible, the books of Moses, but not the rest. And they didn't believe in spirits or angels.

They didn't believe in the resurrection. And so, they come with this question. And the question was built on sort of an old, you'll find it in Deuteronomy, it's in Levitic law, where if a man and a woman, they were husband and wife, and there was no children in the marriage, the man died, then a brother close by would take this woman to be wife in the hope of continuing the family line.

So they put forward this really extreme example. And they say, right, and we read it here, here's this man, he dies, his brother then marries a woman, he dies, then his other brother marries a woman, he dies, and so it goes on until the seven of them, there's seven brothers, and they all marry this woman, and they all die, and then the woman dies.

[11:53] And then they say, right, you're talking about the resurrection. In the resurrection, whose wife will she be? The seven have had her? Who will claim her as wife?

But Jesus says to them, you know, you don't understand. Because what really the Lord is saying is, there's going to be a new order in glory. Things are going to be different.

And I think it's very hard for us to understand because we're governed by what we know. We're governed by the physical. We're governed by our senses in this world.

we don't know anything else. But Jesus shows that in the world to come in glory that he says that they neither marry nor are given in marriage.

Now, one of the reasons why is that for they cannot die anymore. Now, one of the reasons, not the obvious, the only reason, but one of the functions of marriage is to continue a line generation after generation production of producing children.

[13:07] In glory that will cease because when the kingdom is handed over, when the kingdom is complete, it will be complete. Nobody else will be brought into it and nobody will be put out of it.

It will be a complete kingdom. And so, what happens here will not happen there. This is one area of life where it's obvious that there will be no birth.

This is not how things will be. It will be a new order. The Bible doesn't tell us how it will be. So, people will say, well, does that mean that our relationships in this world, how things were in this world, does that mean that it ceases?

That when we die, it's the end of everything? Well, we do know that when a couple get married, that part of the vows is either you can say for until death do you part or for as long as you live, so that the marriage relationship as such is for life here in this world.

However, having said that, I do not for one moment believe that in glory we won't have our own identity identity and we won't be aware, I would say we will be far more aware and our identity will be all the greater and I believe that in Christ that our relationships in this world, which were forged and founded in Christ, will at one level, although it will be in a new order and in a new way, will be greater than they will be in this world.

[14:53] I do not think for one moment that heaven will ever be less than it is here. I believe that everything will be intensified and far greater, however that will be, I don't know.

You see, in this world, one of the things about marriage is marriage gives protection, it gives security to the relationship. in glory, there will be no need for that, because we will be in an environment that is completely sinless and completely pure.

And I don't think we can even begin to understand, but as we interact with one another in this state of holiness and purity and love and joy, where there is not one stain of sin or threat of sin in our environment or within us or anywhere around, our interaction and our relationships with one another in Christ will be unbelievable.

I shouldn't say unbelievable, they will be believable, but they will be incredible, they will be awesome, it will be spiritual, it will be powerful, far greater than anything here.

And I think we've got to try and realize that we so often, you see, we're so bound by the here and the now, you see, it's going to be different. We're going to be brought into a world which not only will our environment be different, but will be different, because we're told in the Bible that we will be like

him, like Jesus, where there will be this incredible, this amazing transformation will take place at death.

[16:46] the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, where there is this instant transformation takes place in the soul, so that the soul will mirror the likeness of Christ without any defilement or impurity that the soul has here in this world.

And there are so many things that we don't have an answer to. But what I did say is that however things are here in this world, in Christ they will be far better there.

And as I say, our identity will continue. We won't lose it. And our knowledge will be greater than ever. Now it's very interesting that as Jesus answers the question that the Sadducees bring before him about the resurrection, there are lots of Old Testament passages Jesus could have used as an example.

He could have gone and spoken from Job or Psalms or Ezekiel or Isaiah or Daniel that speak about the future world, about the age to come.

But he didn't. Very cleverly, Jesus went to the books, the five books of the Sadducees held to and believed.

[18:10] And he went to Moses. And you see how clever the Lord Jesus is. Because he says, they're not going to listen to me if I go to the other books. But I'll go to the books they believe in.

And he speaks about Moses. And he says, you know, when God called Moses at the bush, God called and he said that he was the Lord God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.

Now, these men physically were long since dead. But God doesn't say, I was the God of Abraham. I was the God of Isaac.

I was the God of Jacob. But he's saying, I am the God of Abraham. I am the God of Isaac. I am the God of Jacob. And Jesus is showing he is the God of the living, not the dead.

These men, although they physically died, they aren't spiritually dead, their identity has continued. And indeed, one of these men was conversing with Moses up on the mount.

[19:16] Remember when Moses and Elijah came? Far more goes on, and I'm more and more convinced that the veil between heaven and earth is much thinner than ever we realize.

He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And Jesus says that we will be like the angels, for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

So, with regard to being like the angels, it means that when we die in Jesus Christ, we will be immortal. Not eternal, God alone is eternal.

To be eternal is without beginning and without end. God alone is in that category. we will become immortal. That means that we will live forever.

But of course, we've had a beginning and so do the angels have a beginning. But we will live forever in a world where there will be no more pain, no more disease, no more frailty, no more aging, no more death.

[20:27] It's extraordinary. It's so hard to imagine, but that is what the Bible shows us. We will always be alive, always dynamic, energized by the Son.

The angels are holy beings. They see the result of sin, they see the impact of sin in this world, but they themselves have never experienced sin.

These angels that are serving the Lord, they are sinless beings. And in glory, that's how we will be, completely clear of any form or stain of sin, whatever.

The angels are humble and obedient servants, and there is no task that is too menial for them. An example of that is Lazarus, who was dying.

Remember Lazarus, the rich man and Lazarus? Nobody bothered with Lazarus, apart from the dogs. He was such a beggar, that people just dismissed him like rubbish.

[21:37] Only the dogs licked his sores. He was too low for people to deal with, but he wasn't too low for the angels to deal with. The angels were ministering around Lazarus, and the angels carried his soul into glory when he died.

So you see that things which might be considered in this world too low for humans to do, it's never too low for the angels to do, because they are ministering and they are obedient to the Lord and humble before the Lord.

And that is how it should be. And I think sometimes we tend to forget that, that sometimes people, when they're doing things, and particularly maybe within the church, they want to be doing things that are prominent and things that will be recognized, that's not how it works. It doesn't matter what the Lord gives you to do, it's important. You may not think it's very important, it is. You remember that even the giving of a cup of water is important in the eyes of the Lord. The Lord's taking note of it. The Lord will give a reward for it. Nobody else in the whole world might know that you've given any water to anybody but the person you've given it to, but the Lord's taking note and he says that will carry its reward.
[22 : 58] There is no task too menial in God's sight if it is done to and for the Lord. And what an encouragement that is to us as we go on.

And again the angels will be constantly serving and worshipping. Constant praise and adoration within the heart.

And we see the result to the Sadducees even they had to admit and they said well teacher you've spoken well and they didn't dare ask any questions again. And then in verse 41 Jesus is making a powerful point in this question from the Psalms because the Messiah he's showing here was not only David's descendant but he was also David's Lord and this God.

And he's showing that the Messiah is not just a successor of David coming down the Davidic line but he is also David's sovereign. And you know this is the wonderful thing where Jesus is here showing his own humanity coming down the line the Davidic line but he's also showing his own divinity.

He's a Messiah. He's a God man. It was and this is what the wonderful thing and as David is quoting here from sorry Jesus is quoting from the Psalms we've got to remember that the Psalms are full of Christ.

[24 : 33] His suffering his humiliation his dying his resurrection his ascension his return all these things are found.

You know this morning we're looking at Christ's role in life his authority in life and we're looking to the fact that we're going to carry on our identity is not going to stop when we die physically we will die but we will be as aware of everything when we die in fact our awareness will be heightened and we will go on the question is we're going on where well the Bible shows us there's only two destinies where either to be with the Lord or separate from the Lord either in his presence or pushed away forever from his presence it's in this life we make the choice to either be with Christ which is far better or to hear the words depart from me for I never knew you well

I would urge you we've been working through this gospel of Luke we're coming near the end we've been on a journey with Jesus and I pray and I hope that as we journey and we have been journeying with Jesus that none of us here will stop journeying with Jesus but that we will continue in a spiritual way by faith laying hold upon him accepting him and saying Lord I don't want just a journey in my mind I don't just want a journey in the reading I want a journey in life I want to be with you and you know if you really want to be with Jesus Jesus will have you he will take you and the person who really wants to be with Jesus Jesus will say well I want to be with that person not only now but forever you make sure that you are one with Jesus let's pray

Lord we we pray to bless us as we have been under the word and we pray that its reality its authority and its power may touch our hearts we sometimes when we come to the word we have to confess that there are areas and aspects of it that in our humanity that we cannot grasp particularly with regard to how things will be in the future because we're so grounded in the here and now and yet faith lays hold upon and believes and accepts that there will be glorious things and wonderful things and that I hath not seen nor hear heard neither hath it entered into the heart of man what God has prepared and so we pray that there might be an excitement and an anticipation for the glory that will be revealed and we pray that we will all be found in Jesus

Christ bless us we pray part us with thy blessing do us good and take away our sin in Jesus name we ask it amen