

Our passage for today follows Jesus' Triumphal Entry and cleansing the temple. Every morning people come in great crowds to hear Him teach. The teaching seems to be interactive. People stand up and ask sincere questions. The political powers have planted spies who ask leading questions to try to trap Him.

¹⁹ The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at that very hour, for they perceived that he had told this parable against them, but they feared the people.

Luke 20:19 The scribes and chief priests knew that they were the wicked tenants in the parable Jesus had just told. They understood that Jesus had said the nation would be taken from them and given to others. So as strange as it may seem, they went about doing the very thing Jesus spoke of in the parable, attempting to kill the son to keep the vineyard, Israel, for themselves. Did any of them consider that they were doing what Jesus predicted they would do? They were prevented from acting immediately because the people clung to Jesus' words. Fear of the public reaction kept them from arresting Jesus.

²⁰ 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. Luke 20:20 Mark 12:13ⁱ gives us some insight into the teamwork of two political forces that today we would call the swamp. The Pharisees were the political right wing. They were nationalistic and hoping for the coming of a new King David. The Herodians were the left-wing compromisers working with the powers that be to maintain the status quo and trying to get people to accept the Herod dynasty. The two parties hated each other. But the enemy of my enemy is my friend, at least when it is convenient. Jesus was their mutual enemy. They both hated Him for their own reasons. He threatened what they both stood for. He had just silenced them after they questioned His authority. His stinging parable had shown what swamp creatures they both were. He ended it with two clear Messianic passages that backed His assessment of them (Psalm 118:22ⁱⁱ; Isaiah 8:14,15ⁱⁱⁱ). The people would have agreed with Jesus in that assessment.

Hatred is a powerful uniting force, and these two groups mutual hatred of Jesus brought them together to put a stop to the public's increasing acceptance of Him. The scribes and chief priests came up with a plan to make it appear that Rome was the power behind Jesus' arrest. They would plant spies who pretended to be sincere. Those spies would ask leading questions to try to get Jesus to say something against Rome. The people hated Rome, but everyone was afraid to speak out for fear of reprisals. But Jesus spoke boldly, and perhaps He would say something that could be prosecuted.

²¹ So they asked him, "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God. Luke 19:21 First they flattered Jesus, saying He spoke the truth boldly, not caring what others think. This was to encourage Him to make a bold statement against Rome. Beware of flattering remarks that come before a leading question (Psalm 12:3^{iv}). Many preachers are susceptible to flattery. Of course, we always give the glory to God, but then few of us will discourage a person from adding more praises. Jesus, however, knows the proverb (29:5^v) which tells us that "Whosoever flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet."

²² Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" Luke 19:22 This was a big question of the day. The Zealots taught that Israel was God's land and that Jews should therefore refuse to pay taxes to the Roman occupiers. If Jesus said it wasn't lawful to pay

taxes, the Herodians would tell the governor and have Jesus arrested. If He said it was lawful to pay taxes to Rome He would appear to be siding with Rome and denying God's sovereignty over the land, which Pharisees would use to turn the people against Him. They thought for sure this would trap Him. They thought it was an unanswerable question like the one Jesus recently posed to them, "Was John's baptism from heaven or from men" (20:4^{vi})?

²³ But he perceived their craftiness, and said to them, ²⁴ "Show me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" They said, "Caesar's." Luke 20:23,24 They may have gotten an A in drama class but Jesus saw right through their craftiness. He asked for a denarius, which was a Roman coin with the emperor's image. Nothing with an image of man should have been on the temple grounds, let alone a coin on which was written "Tiberius, son of the divine Augustus." It was blasphemous. One of the Herodians must have offered a coin before he realized the mistake he was making. It was a clue to the crowd that these Herodians were up to no good. Jesus just trapped them and caused them to reveal that they were not devout Jews. The charade would have then become clear to most people observing the confrontation.

Jesus then emphasized the point by asking whose image was on the coin. Tiberius Caesar's image was imprinted on it. These coins could not be used for offerings or temple tax and had to be exchanged outside the temple. One could no longer exchange them in the outer court for Jesus had driven them out when He arrived. The Herodians would have been reluctant to say, "Caesar's image," but everyone knew the answer. Backing Herod was to submit to Caesar. Now it was they who were starting to feel the heat.

²⁵ He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Luke 20:25 Now we come to Jesus' punchline that often comes at the end of His teaching. Yield to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God what is God's. In saying this He was declaring that Rome had expenses in keeping the peace and to be charged temporal wealth for the service was legitimate (Romans 13:1-4^{vii}; Titus 3:1^{viii}). Ancient coins were considered the property of the one whose image was on the coin. However, the land is God's and so are our lives. The eternal things should be surrendered to God. Jesus was saying the Caesar isn't God. He is just a passing ruler who will one day stand before God and give an account, as will we all (Psalm 62:12^{ix}). What have we done with all that God has given us? What have we given Him of our time, relationships, health, and finances that He has given us? **Caesar can have the little round pieces of metal with his image. You bear the image of God (Genesis 1:27^x)! Your time, your energy, your heart, your very life is God's.** Are you giving yourself to Him in love and service?

Jesus' answer showed the problem in the question. The question was really about material wealth, rather than God's sovereignty over our lives. The refusal to pay taxes was a false issue based on the love of money and disdain for those whom God had allowed to rule the land. If they really believed the basis for the question, they might have asked why God allowed Rome to occupy the nation. Perhaps Jesus' answer caused some of the people to turn their thoughts from anger toward Rome to search their own hearts.

Jesus' answer shows that as believers we are to be subject to earthly governments. Peter states this clearly in 1 Peter 2:13-17^{xi}. However, our ultimate and eternal allegiance is to God. When Peter and John were ordered to stop preaching, they declared, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:28,29^{xii}.)! When the government demands we disobey

God, we must refuse. Men will abuse government positions just as some church leaders misuse their positions. Where position and power are involved there will be abuse by men, nevertheless governmental structure for the sake of order is much better than anarchy. We are witnessing that truth in the news this week.

²⁶ *And they were not able in the presence of the people to catch him in what he said, but marveling at his answer they became silent.* Luke 20:26 The fact that Jesus avoided the trap was not what caused them to marvel. It was that He brought out the real issue. Try as they may, plot and scheme as best they could, they could not catch Jesus in something that they could take to Rome. It is telling that they wanted to catch Jesus saying something against Rome so they could use Rome to do their dirty work. It reveals that their hearts were only striving to maintain power by any means necessary.

We don't have to be a political player to have the same desire. The desire to have this world is what keeps most people from giving their heart to Jesus. So many would rather have the coins, or the in-friends, or the honor of man, the passing things, while passing up the eternal treasures. That is why atheists try so hard to come up with theories and criticisms of the Bible and faith in Christ. Why do they try so hard? Why should they care? According to their philosophy we are just inferior and ignorant people. They try so hard because there is a nagging sense of living for what is temporary and they are desperate to justify it. They would rather bear the image of an ape, for apes live for the here and now. But the image of God on us haunts them.

²⁷ *There came to him some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection,* Luke 20:27 The Sadducees were from the priestly line of Zadok and therefore they controlled the office of chief priest and all that went on in the temple. They did not believe in the resurrection, divine intervention, or a final judgment. Josephus tells us they were well to do and advanced in power because they could pay for it. He describes them as heartless materialists. They were willing to work with Rome to maintain their influential places in the temple and the Sanhedrin. They were next at trying their hand at trapping Jesus for He believed in the resurrection. The conundrum they presented had probably stumped the Pharisees, so they tried it on Jesus.

²⁸ *and they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.* Luke 20:28 The law of Moses provided for childless widows whose brothers-in-law were still living. Because it was almost impossible for a woman to support herself in that time, and because the property rights are passed down to the male child, the brother-in-law was to marry the widow so she could have a provider and an heir (Deuteronomy 25:5,6^{xiii}). We can see this was the custom even before the Law in the story of Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38:6-8^{xiv}). It explains what was taking place in the book of Ruth with the kinsman redeemer (Ruth 3:1-4^{xv}).

Modern culture is trying to downplay a woman's natural desire to be a mother and care for her children. Some feminists claim it hinders their ability to enjoy life, but the opposite is true. They are denying the natural impulses God put in us. The law was in place for the sake of the widow. Women felt it was a shame if they were barren. You can see this struggle to have children in the battle that went on between Jacob's wives.

²⁹ *Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife, and died without children.* ³⁰ *And the second* ³¹ *and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died.* ³² *Afterward the woman also died.* Luke 20:29-32 This is a make-believe scenario,

but it may have been taken from the book of Tobit in which a similar situation is told. Real life is much more complex. But for the sake of the argument it was presented as if all seven brothers marry the poor widow and each in turn dies and then she dies.

³³ *In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife.*" Luke 20:33 Finally they come to the trap. They confidently asked, "Who will she be married to in the resurrection? Hmm?" You can almost see the glee on their faces as they thought they had stumped Jesus. "What did He mean by His parable of being rejected and coming back to crush them? There is no coming back from the dead! We've got Him now," they thought. They didn't understand that in their smug confidence they had just fallen on the Rock (Luke 20:18^{xvi}). They didn't know they were speaking to the One who is Truth!

³⁴ *And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage,* ³⁵ *but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage,* ³⁶ *for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.* Luke 20:34-36 Jesus had a perspective that they had most likely never heard before. Jews saw time as two ages. There was this age in which we live in this sin sick world and there was the age to come when the Messiah reigns. Jews saw that coming age as merely an extension of this one only much better. That is similar to Mormon belief. They think the women with whom you seal a marriage in the temple will be your Eves to populate planets in the next life on your way to becoming divinity.

Jesus told them those who are considered worthy to attain to that age, and we are only worthy because of what Jesus did for us, will neither marry nor be given in marriage. Here there is a need to reproduce and to mature. Marriage serves those purposes. There will be no need for either in the coming age. We will never die, so there is no need to reproduce. The work in us will be complete so we will not need to mature (Philippians 1:6^{xvii}), which is one of the good effects of living with an opposite. There, we will love everyone equally and without lust. You won't miss your spouse, for you will love him or her even more purely and be with them as much as you like, but you'll find just as much joy in fellowship with other people as well.

Jesus used three wonderful expressions to describe those in the resurrection, equal to the angels, sons of God, and sons of the resurrection. Angels don't reproduce. They are satisfied to be in God's glorious, immortal presence (1 Corinthians 15:43^{xviii}). They do the will of God without fault, and so will we in that age (Matthew 6:10^{xix}). Finally, angels live in continual worship of God for they see Him as He is. That will be our joy too.

Men and women will be sons of God, which is to say heirs of all that God has for us. Just as we are all the bride of Christ, so we are all sons of God. Ladies, don't balk at the word sons, it isn't excluding women, it is telling you of your future exalted position as full heirs of God.

The same is true with sons of the resurrection. We live in the resurrected life of Christ now, but then we will experience it to an even greater degree. Our bodies will be changed to be like His glorified body (Philippians 3:21^{xx}). If you are a son of God today because you are in Christ Jesus, you can say to yourself, "In that day I will be equal to the angels, a son of the resurrection!" Remember that every born-again believer can say that as well. That is why we need to start loving one another now. That is why we need to respect and honor one another above ourselves (Philippians 2:3^{xxi}).

³⁷ But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.

³⁸ Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him. ” Luke 20:37,38

Here comes Jesus' punchline. You know from the past confrontations with Jesus He is going use Scripture or allude to it. Jesus went to the Torah to defend the truth that there is a resurrection. He could have gone to Job 19:25-27^{xxii} or Daniel 12:2,3^{xxiii} or Isaiah 26:19^{xxiv}, or Psalm 73:24^{xxv} but all Jews hold the Torah as the most inspired of all the Scriptures. Jesus used a simple, logical argument. God told Moses, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6^{xxvi}) If they died and were no more, then he would be saying that God is the God of nothing. That was unacceptable to all Jews. So, God can't be the God of the dead. He has to be the God of the living, for all live to Him. Death is just a doorway to heaven or hell. If we are worthy in Christ to be sons of the resurrection, then He is a doorway into His eternal presence, which is something the book of Hebrews tells us they understood (Hebrews 11:16^{xxvii}). If the patriarchs were no more, God would have said, "I *was* the God of Abraham."

One thing we are facing in Jesus' answer is the fact that Jesus uses life and death in ways differently than we use the words. To Him, life is being right with God. "He who has the Son has life" (John 3:36^{xxviii})! Death is separation from God because God is of purer eyes than to behold evil (Habakkuk 1:13^{xxix}) Those separated from God cannot call God their God. They have another god, the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4^{xxx}). Nor will God claim them as His.

"All live to Him!" Those who have died are not dead to God. We no longer see them or communicate with them, but God does. They have passed into the spiritual realm and God is a spirit (John 4:24^{xxxi}). God breathed into Adam the breath of life. Breath in Hebrew is the same word for spirit. Our life is the spirit within us. The spirit does not die when the body dies. The Sadducees missed that important reality.

³⁹ Then some of the scribes answered, "Teacher, you have spoken well. ” ⁴⁰ For they no longer dared to ask him any question. Luke 20:39,40 Mark records that Jesus told them that they didn't know the Scriptures of the power of God (Mark 12:24^{xxxii}). What a blow to their ecclesiastical egos. Those on Jesus' side of the argument had never heard such a clear rebuff of the Sadducees false beliefs. They couldn't help but compliment Him, even though they had recently tried to trap Him. At this point they gave up trying to catch Jesus with His words. The wisdom of the rabbi from backwater Galilee was more than their match. They would have to distort what He had said to make an accusation. They would have to find scoundrels to lie about Him (Matthew 26:59,60^{xxxiii}).

People to this day still try to find something wrong in what Jesus said. They use words like the word "sons" to claim Jesus was a chauvinist. In doing so, they only display their ignorance. The world is full of modern-day Sadducees, materialists who claim that this life is all there is. They suggest you enjoy it while you can, meaning you should fulfill your lusts because there will never be a judgment day. Jesus could say to them that they err in not knowing the revelation of God found in Scripture.

In Jerusalem today you can see the ruins of the burned out, formerly opulent homes of some of the Sadducee priests. All they lived for is in ashes. And then there are the apostles. They left nothing behind but their words. They invested their all in heaven. Which would you rather be on the day we all stand before God to give an account?

Questions:

- 1 Why did the leaders hate Jesus?
- 2 What was their plan to stop Him?
- 3 Why was their question so clever?
- 4 How did Jesus' answer avoid the trap?
- 5 What did it reveal about them?
- 6 Who were the Sadducees?
- 7 What was their trap?
- 8 How did Jesus prove them wrong?
- 9 What will we be like in heaven?
- 10 What caused the scribes to err? How about us?

ⁱ **Mark 12:13 (ESV)**

¹³ And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk.

ⁱⁱ **Psalm 118:22 (ESV)**

²² The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Isaiah 8:14-15 (ESV)**

¹⁴ And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ¹⁵ And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken."

^{iv} **Psalm 12:3 (ESV)**

³ May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts,

^v **Proverbs 29:5 (ESV)**

⁵ A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.

^{vi} **Luke 20:4 (ESV)**

⁴ was the baptism of John from heaven or from man?"

^{vii} **Romans 13:1-4 (ESV)**

¹ Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

^{viii} **Titus 3:1 (ESV)**

¹ Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work,

^{ix} **Psalm 62:12 (ESV)**

¹² and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love. For you will render to a man according to his work.

^x **Genesis 1:27 (ESV)**

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

^{xi} **1 Peter 2:13-17 (ESV)**

¹³ Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. ¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. ¹⁶ Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. ¹⁷ Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

^{xii} **Acts 5:28,29 (ESV)**

²⁸ saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." ²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.

^{xiii} **Deuteronomy 25:5-6 (ESV)**

⁵ "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. ⁶ And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.

^{xiv} **Genesis 38:6-8 (ESV)**

⁶ And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. ⁷ But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD put him to death. ⁸ Then Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother."

^{xv} **Ruth 3:1-4 (ESV)**

¹ Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you? ² Is not Boaz our relative, with whose young women you were? See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. ³ Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴ But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do."

^{xvi} **Luke 20:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."

^{xvii} **Philippians 1:6 (ESV)**

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

^{xviii} **1 Corinthians 15:43 (ESV)**

⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.

^{xix} **Matthew 6:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

^{xx} **Philippians 3:21 (ESV)**

²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

^{xxi} **Philippians 2:3 (ESV)**

³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

^{xxii} **Job 19:25-27 (ESV)**

²⁵ For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. ²⁶ And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, ²⁷ whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!

^{xxiii} **Daniel 12:2-3 (ESV)**

² And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. ³ And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

^{xxiv} **Isaiah 26:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.

^{xxv} **Psalms 73:24 (ESV)**

²⁴ You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory.

^{xxvi} **Exodus 3:6 (ESV)**

⁶ And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

^{xxvii} **Hebrews 11:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

^{xxviii} **John 3:36 (ESV)**

³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

^{xxix} **Habakkuk 1:13 (ESV)**

¹³ You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?

^{xxx} **2 Corinthians 4:4 (ESV)**

⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

^{xxxi} **John 4:24 (ESV)**

²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

^{xxxii} **Mark 12:24 (ESV)**

²⁴ Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?"

^{xxxiii} **Matthew 26:59-60 (ESV)**

⁵⁹ Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, ⁶⁰ but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward