

SBCOD Bible Study Notes

5-22-25

Luke 20

The Authority of Jesus Questioned

¹ 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. ² “Tell us by what authority you are doing these things,” they said. “Who gave you this authority?” ³ He replied, “I will also ask you a question. Tell me: ⁴ John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin?” ⁵ They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Why didn’t you believe him?’ ⁶ But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ all the people will stone us, because they are persuaded that John was a prophet.” ⁷ So they answered, “We don’t know where it was from.” ⁸ Jesus said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”

20:1-8 This group of leaders wanted to get rid of Jesus, so they tried to trap him with their question. If Jesus would answer that his authority came from God— if he stated openly that he was the Messiah and the Son of God— they would accuse him of blasphemy and bring him to trial. Jesus did not let himself be caught. Instead, he turned the question on them. Thus, he exposed their motives and avoided their trap.

20:8 Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things: When they showed themselves to be insincere seekers, Jesus refused to answer their question. Jesus had great care and compassion for the sincere seeker, but not for cynical critics and manipulators. If we want answers from Jesus, we must deal rightly with the truth that has already been revealed. These men knew that John said Jesus was the Messiah, and were not willing to accept it.

The Parable Of The Tenants – Verses 9-16

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, “God forbid!”

20:9-16 The characters in this story are easily identified. Even the religious leaders understood it. The owner of the vineyard is God; the vineyard is Israel; the tenants are the religious leaders; the servants are the prophets and priests God sent to Israel; the son is the Messiah, Jesus; and the others are the Gentiles. Jesus’ parable indirectly answered the religious leaders’ question about his authority; it also showed them that he knew about their plan to kill him.

Jesus applies the parable – Verses 17-19

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 cornerstone’? ¹⁸ Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; anyone 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.

20:17-18 Quoting Psalm 118:22, Jesus showed the unbelieving leaders that even their rejection of the Messiah had been prophesied in Scripture. Ignoring the cornerstone was dangerous. A person could be tripped or crushed (judged and punished). Jesus’ comments were veiled, but the religious leaders had no trouble interpreting them. They immediately wanted to arrest him.

20:18 The word “broken” conjures up uniformly negative images: broken bones, broken hearts, broken toys. You don’t want something you value to be broken. Conversely, in God’s dictionary, brokenness is not only good but also essential. He uses only people whose hearts, volition, and pride have been broken. Jesus gives a double warning: those who stumble over that stone— himself— will “be broken to pieces,” while it will crush anyone it falls on. God offers a choice of “brokennesses.” Those who cast themselves on Jesus, submitting their wills and all that they are to him, will be broken by him of arrogance, hard-heartedness, and self-centeredness. It is not a pleasant process but an absolutely necessary one. For those who do not submit to him, he will ultimately “fall on” them, an experience that can only be described as “crushing.” The choice is yours: broken before him, or crushed by him.

Paying Taxes to Caesar – Verses 20-26

²⁰ Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be sincere. 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 image and inscription are on it?” “Caesar’s,” they replied. ²⁵ He said to them, “Then give back 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.

20:20-22 This was a loaded question. The Jews were enraged at having to pay taxes to Rome, thus supporting the pagan government and its gods. They hated the system that allowed tax collectors to charge exorbitant rates and keep the extra for themselves. If Jesus said they should pay taxes, they would call him a traitor to their nation and their religion. But if he said they should not, they could report him to Rome as a rebel. Jesus’ questioners thought they had him this time, but he outwitted them again.

20:23-26 Jesus turned his enemies’ attempt to trap him into a powerful lesson: As God’s followers, we have legitimate obligations to both God and the government. But it is important to keep our priorities straight. When the two authorities conflict, our duty to God always must come before our duty to the government.

The Resurrection And Marriage – Verses 27-33

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 raise up offspring 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?”

20:27-33 The Sadducees, a group of conservative religious leaders, honored only the Pentateuch—Genesis through Deuteronomy— as Scripture. “They were the conservative, aristocratic, high-priestly party, worldly minded and very ready to cooperate with the Romans, which, of course, enabled them to maintain their privileged position.” They also did not believe in a resurrection of the dead because they could find no mention of it in those books. The Sadducees decided to try their hand at tricking Jesus, so they brought him a question that they probably had used successfully to stump the Pharisees. After addressing their question about marriage, Jesus answered their real question about the resurrection. Basing his answer on the writings of Moses— an authority they respected— he upheld belief in the resurrection.

Jesus Corrects Their Misunderstanding Of Resurrection Life – Verses 34-36

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 the age to come 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.

20:34-36 Neither marry nor are given in marriage: First, Jesus reminded them that life in the resurrection is quite different from this life. It does not merely continue this world and its arrangements, but it is life of a completely different order. This passage has made many wonder if marriage relationships will exist in heaven, or if those who are husband and wife on earth will have no special relationship in heaven. We are not told enough about life in the world beyond to answer in great detail, but we can understand a few principles. Family relationships will still be known in life in the world beyond. The rich man Jesus described in the afterlife was aware of his family relationships (Luke 16:27-28). The glory of heaven will be a relationship and connection with God that surpasses anything else, including present family relationships (Revelation 21:22-23).

20:34-36 If it seems that life in the resurrection that Jesus spoke of here does not include some of the pleasures of life we know on earth, it is only because the enjoyments and satisfactions of heaven far surpass what we know on earth. We can’t be completely certain what life in glory beyond will be like, but we can know with certainty that no one will be disappointed with the arrangements (Revelation 22:1-5).

Jesus Proves The Resurrection From The Scriptures – Verses 37-40

³⁷ But in the account of the burning 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.

20:37-40 Jesus answered the Sadducees' question, then he went beyond it to the real issue. People may ask you tough religious questions, such as "How can a loving God allow people to starve?" "If God knows what I'm going to do, do I have any free choice?" If they do, follow Jesus' example. First, answer them to the best of your ability; then look for the real issue: hurt over a personal tragedy, for example, or difficulty in making a decision. Often the spoken question is only a test, not of your ability to answer hard questions, but of your willingness to listen and care.

Whose Son Is The Messiah? – Verses 41-44

⁴¹ Then Jesus said to them, "Why is it said that the Messiah 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?"

20:41-44 The Pharisees and Sadducees had asked their questions. Then Jesus turned the tables and asked them a question that went right to the heart of the matter— what they thought about the Messiah's identity. The Pharisees knew that the Messiah would be a descendant of David, but they did not understand that he would be more than a human descendant— he would be God in the flesh. Jesus quoted from Psalm 110:1 to show that David knew that the Messiah would be both human and divine. The Pharisees expected only a human ruler to restore Israel's greatness as in the days of David and Solomon. The central issue of life is what we believe about Jesus. Other spiritual questions are irrelevant unless we first decide to believe that Jesus is who he said he is. The Pharisees and Sadducees could not do this. They remained confused over Jesus' identity.

Warning Against The Teachers Of The Law – Verses 45-47

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 with respect 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. These men will be punished most severely."

20:45-47 The teachers of the law loved the benefits associated with their position, and they sometimes cheated the poor in order to get even more benefits. Every job has its rewards, but gaining rewards should never become more important than doing the job faithfully. God will punish people who use their position of responsibility to cheat others. Use whatever resources you have been given to help others and not just yourself.

20:47 How strange to think that the teachers of the law would receive the worst punishment. But behind their appearance of holiness and respectability, they were arrogant, crafty, selfish, and uncaring. Jesus exposed their evil hearts. He showed that despite their pious words, they were neglecting God's laws and doing as they pleased. Religious deeds do not cancel sin. Jesus said that God's most severe judgment awaited these teachers because they should have been living examples of mercy and justice.