

Engaging Enemies

a. The Authority of the Son (20:1-19)

20:1.2 The ultimate religious question! (Exodus 3:13; 4:1-9; 8:18,19)

[1] (20:1-8) Of hardly any day in our Lord's life have we so full a report. The day may be considered the last working day of Christ's ministry, the last of His public teaching, the last of activity in the temple, the last of instruction to the people and of warning to their leaders. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p. 455

[2] [20:2] For there was no principle more firmly established by universal consent than that *authoritative* teaching required previous *authorization*. **Alfred Edersheim** *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* Vol.2 p. 381

20.3-8 How does this theological trap reveal the heart of Christ's enemies?

[3] [20:14] John the Baptist had been a considerable religious figure and it was legitimate to expect the ecclesiastical authorities to pronounce on the origin of his baptism. Moreover the answer to Jesus's question would have given the answer to theirs, for John had testified that He was the Messiah. But if they did not believe John's prophecy of the approaching kingdom, they could not be expected to hail its presence in Jesus. **Leon Morris**, *Luke* p. 283

20:9-12 How could Christ's audience relate to this parable? (Isaiah 5:1-7)

[4] [20:9-20] The parable we have now read, is one of the very few which are recorded more than once by the Gospel writers. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, all give it at full length. This 3-fold repetition is alone sufficient to point out the importance of its contents. ... The parable of the sower, the parable of the mustard seed, and the parable of the wicked husbandmen, are the only parables which are 3 times recorded in the gospels. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol.2 pp. 324,329

[5] [20:9-19] The parable contains the answer to the question which they had raised. He is acting in the authority of His Father who sent Him to them. The imagery is taken from the O.T. and would be readily understood by the audience. The main source is the similar parable Isa 5:1-7; but comp. Jer. 2:21; Ezek 15:1-6; 19:10-14; Hos. 10:1, Deut. 32:32,33, and the many other passages in which Israel is spoken of as a vineyard or a vine; Ps. 80:8ff; Joel 1:7, etc. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p. 458

[6] [20:10] In Luke it is always a single slave who is sent, and the treatment becomes worse each time, culminating in the slaying of the heir, before whom no one is killed. In Matthew and Mark there

is no such dramatic climax, and several are killed before the son is sent: all which is more in accordance with facts in Jewish history. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p. 459

20:13-16 What more can even God do for the stone heart? (Hebrews 6:4-8)

[7] [20:14] Tenants were known to claim possession of land they had worked for absentee landlords (Talmud, *Baba Bathra* 35b, 40b). In a day when title was sometimes uncertain, anyone who had had the use of land for three years was presumed to own it in the absence of an alternative claim (Mishnah, *Baba Bathra* 3:1). The tenants were clearly relying on the fact that the owner was a long way away (9). They seem to have thought that with all the trouble the vineyard was causing him, he would not bother to press his claim. They would claim that the vineyard was theirs, as their occupation of it during the preceding years, during which they had paid rent to no-one, plainly showed. **Leon Morris**, *Luke* p. 285

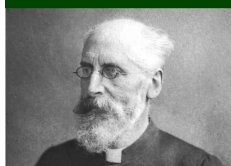
[8] (20:13-16) There is His answer to the question: *By what authority doest thou these things?* Here, as everywhere, the meaning of the title son transcends absolutely the notion of Messiah, or theocratic king, or any office whatever. The title expresses above all the notion of a personal relation to God as Father. The theocratic office flows from this relation. By this name, Jesus establishes between the servants and Himself an immeasurable distance. **Frederic Godet** *Luke* p. 432

20:17-19 Who are the 'builders' who reject the stone? (Psalm 118:22,23; Daniel 2:34, 35, 44, 45)

[9] [20:17-19] It is therefore dangerous to encounter this stone, either by dashing against it while it is yet laid on the ground, as Israel is doing, or whether, when it shall be raised to the top of the building, men provoke it to fall on their own head, as the other nations shall one day do. **Frederic Godet** *Luke* p. 434

[10] [20:18] Some see in the verse a distinction between the punishment of the Jewish church for its unbelief at Christ's first advent, and the punishment of the Gentile churches at Christ's second advent. The Jewish church stumbled and was "broken", but shall yet be raised again and restored to God's favour at the latter day. The Gentile churches, when God's judgments shall fall upon them at last, shall never be restored. Their ruin shall be complete and irretrievable. They shall be "ground to powder." **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 2 p. 330

The Life and Times of
Jesus the Messiah



**Alfred
Edersheim**
Authoritative
teaching
required
previous
authorization.

The "stone of stumbling" will
become a rock which crushes all
rival kingdoms

Theological traps – a pretense for the proud! (20:20-47)

20:20-22 By whose authority are the enemies REALLY impressed?

20:23-28 The Lord's usual method of teaching even with opponents! (vv. 4,15,17,41,44)

[11] (20:25) The error lay in supposing that Caesar and God were mutually exclusive alternatives. Duty to Caesar was part of their duty to God because for purposes of order and government Caesar was God's vicegerent. In Rom. 12.1,2 St. Paul insists on the second of these principles, in 13:1-7 on the first. **Alfred Plummer** Luke p. 466

20:27-33 A common approach of those who challenge revelation – ridicule!

[12] (20:27-38) Apparently the Pharisees were willing to concede that the doctrine of the resurrection is not to be found in the written Law; and indeed outside the Book of Daniel it is not clearly taught in O.T. What is said in favour of it (Job 19:26; Ps. 16:9,11; Isa. 26:19) seems to be balanced by statements equally strong on the other side (Ps. 6:5, 88:10,11; 65:17; Eccles 9:4-10; Isa. 38:18,19). Hence it followed, on Sadducean principles, that the doctrine was without authority, and was simply a pious opinion. **Alfred Plummer** Luke p. 467

20:34-36 A rare occasion when Christ gives special revelation to His enemies

[13] (20:34) *The sons of this age* is an expression found elsewhere in the New Testament only in 16:8, where it is distinguished from 'the sons of light'. Here, however, it denotes all who live in this world. **Leon Morris** Luke p. 291

20:37-40 Is it always best to seek explicit 'proof texts' when teaching others? Note Christ's starting point

[14] He does not appeal to some obscure verse, hitherto overlooked, but to that passage of central importance in which God

revealed His Name, with all that that means. He speaks of *the passage about the bush* (Ex.3:1-6) The Bible of those days lacked chapters and verses and had to be referred to in terms of content. **Leon Morris** Luke p. 292

[15] [20:37] Some have thought that stress ought to be laid on the expression in the original quotation, "I am", and not "I was" the God of Abraham etc. Some think, with Mede and others, that our Lord refers to the promise of the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed, and to the fact that this promise, yet unfulfilled, will literally be fulfilled one day by Abraham rising again and possessing the land. **J.C. Ryle** Luke Vol. 2 p.343

[16] [20:39,40] Some of *the scribes*, i.e members of other parties, in this case probably Pharisees, paid Jesus the compliment of saying that He had spoken well: 'that was a fine answer!' (Moffatt). The Sadducees were not popular and probably many were glad to see them so discomfited that *they no longer* dared to question Jesus. **Leon Morris** Luke p. 293

20:41-44 How does the Lord turn the tables on His theological inquisitors?

[17] [20:41-44] Jesus rounded off the session of questions by asking one Himself. The problem He posed arises from the habit in antiquity of regarding earlier generations as greater and wiser than the present one. David was the ideal king and his descendants were by definition less than he. **Leon Morris** Luke p. 293

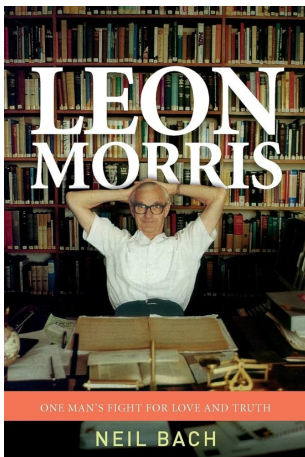
20:45-47 Is the REAL problem of the scribes unorthodox theology? (18:9-14)

[18] [20:46] The grand characteristic of hypocritical and formal religion is love of man's praise, and the honour that comes from man. True grace can wait for honour, and cares little what is has on earth. **J.C. Ryle** Luke Vol. 2 p. 349

[19] (20:47) The Bible teaches distinctly that there will be degrees of glory in heaven. It teaches with no less distinctness both here and elsewhere that there will be degrees of misery in hell. **J.C. Ryle** Luke Vol. 2 p. 347



The Sadducees - the conservative party of Christ's day



[20] The Sadducees are mentioned here only in this Gospel. None of the Sadducee writings has survived so our information about the sect is fragmentary and we see the Sadducees only through the eyes of their opponents. The name appears to be derived from Zadok (cf. 1 Ki. 1:8, 2:35), so that they were "Zadokites". They were the conservative, aristocratic, high-priestly party, worldly-minded and very ready to co-operate with the Romans, which, of course, enabled them to maintain their privileged position. Patriotic nationalists and pious men of religion alike opposed them. They are often said to have acknowledged as sacred scripture only the Pentateuch, but no evidence is cited for this and it seems highly improbable. The Septuagint is evidence that before New Testament times the canon of the Old Testament was practically fixed and there seems no reason why any major Jewish party should have rejected most of it. What is attested is that they rejected the oral tradition that the Pharisees made so much of and accepted only written scripture (Josephus, *Antiquities* 13:297). They denied the whole doctrine of the after life and of rewards and punishments beyond the grave (Josephus, *Antiquities* 18:16, *Bellum* 2:165; cf. Acts 23:8). They probably thought of the resurrection as a new-fangled idea brought in from Persia after the Old Testament period. **Leon Morris** Luke p. 290