

The Question of Authority

Luke 19:45 – 20:19

Have you ever tried to do something to appear impressive only for it to backfire so that you end up looking foolish?

Context and Introduction to Luke 19-21

The broader section of Luke's gospel we are exploring, particularly 19:45 – 21:38, focuses on the escalating conflict between Jesus and the current regime of religious authorities in Jerusalem. After a long section in Luke's gospel (Chapters 9-19), where Jesus has 'set his face towards Jerusalem' knowing that he must ultimately die there at the hands of the hostile authorities, Jesus has finally arrived in Jerusalem, heralded as the long-awaited king by the people (cf. 19:37-40). The religious leaders are not pleased (19:39), and Jesus knows they are determined to reject him, dooming Jerusalem itself to destruction under the judgement of God (19:41-44). From 19:45-21:38, Jesus is presented as teaching in the temple courts with the people hanging off his words, whilst the religious authorities try and fail again and again to discredit Jesus and retain their own position of power. Every step they take seems to only make things worse...

Jesus, the Temple and the Question of Authority (19:45 – 20:8)

Read 19:45 – 20:8

What do Jesus' actions and words (v45-46) imply about:

- Himself?
- The current leadership of the Jewish people?

What do the religious leaders *want* to do to Jesus and why?

What do they *actually* do and why?

What do you think is the motivation of the question from the religious leaders in 20:2? What are they hoping to achieve?

What is so clever about Jesus' response to them?

What point do you think Jesus is ultimately trying to make through his question in verse 4 and final response in verse 8?

The Parable of the Tenants (20:9-19)

Read verses 9-19

Clearly the teachers of the law and chief priests realize that this parable is about them (v19 – and they're not happy about it!).

1) Who / what do each of the characters and actions in the parable represent?

2) Why do you think Jesus told this parable?

The people hearing Jesus' words clearly grasp the shocking implications (and perhaps see that such a judgement might affect them too! Cf. 19:41-44). In response Jesus directs them to certain prophecies in Scripture. How do you think Jesus sees these quotes from Psalm 118 and Isaiah 8 as fulfilled in him?

So what point is Jesus trying to make in verses 17 and 18? And how is it relevant to the response of the people in verse 16?

How does Jesus' teaching here both comfort and warn us as readers of the gospel?

Reflection

Jesus' parable is first of all an allegorical retelling of the sad story of Israel towards God's prophets and the response of the current leaders towards himself. In what sense is it also the story of *all* people?

Are there particular ways in which you resist God's claim over your life and circumstances?

Why is it right that people's response to Jesus determines how God relates to them?

We live in a pluralistic society that resents exclusive religious claims, which can make us reluctant to call people to repent and follow Jesus. How does this passage help us face this challenge?