

Luke 20B

- We're going to jump back into the middle of a scene within the Temple grounds where Jesus was teaching the people
 - A delegation from the Sanhedrin had arrived to challenge Jesus' authority
 - Up to this point we've heard Jesus respond to their challenge by refusing to answer their question
 - Then He proceeded to tell a parable that took aim squarely at the Pharisees
 - They were the bad guys in that they were credited with the fall of Israel
 - And the failure of the nation to accept their Messiah
 - And as Jesus ended the story last week in verse 16, He said that the kingdom would be taken from these leaders and offered to others
 - To which the crowd exclaimed may it never be
- Now we pick up in verse 17 where Jesus continues His commentary against these men by quoting an OT scripture taken from the Psalms

[Luke 20:17](#) But Jesus looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written:
'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,
THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER *stone*'?"

[Luke 20:18](#) "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust."

- At the point in the parable where Jesus declares that the treachery of the Israel's leaders would result in the loss of the kingdom, the crowd reacted
 - They had obviously been following the parable closely
 - And they understood its full meaning, especially as it applied to them
 - They saw the connection between the misbehavior of their leadership and the consequences for the nation

- They obviously understood the meaning of the parable
- And they've seen the hostility of the leadership for Jesus
- And they are putting 2 and 2 together
- And Jesus responds to their exclamation in verse 17
 - Look at how Luke begins the verse: *de* – But or moreover
 - This simple connecting word in the Greek strongly suggests that Jesus' comments were intended to directly contend with the audience's previous statement
 - He was responding to their exclamation
 - He says What then is this that is written?
 - Another way to say this would be, "Are you surprised to learn this? Well, does your own scripture tell you to expect about the arrival of your Messiah?"
 - Then Jesus proceeds to recite a verse to them from a well-known Messianic psalm (118)
 - This is a Psalm filled with Messianic references, and Jesus audience knew it in that way
 - So when He quotes from it, they were already prepared to accept it as a statement about the Messiah's arrival
 - And the verses from Psalms talk about a stone that was rejected as unsuitable for constructing a building
 - But this stone that the builders didn't think was good enough for what they were trying to build ended up being the most important stone in that building
 - Isaiah says it this way:

[Is. 28:16](#) Therefore thus says the Lord GOD,
 "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone,
 A costly cornerstone *for* the foundation, firmly placed.
 He who believes *in it* will not be disturbed.

- Interestingly, both Matthew and Mark show that Jesus including one additional verse from that Psalm in His statement
 - Their version reads like this:

[Mark 12:10](#) “Have you not even read this Scripture:
 ‘THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,
 THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER *stone*;
[Mark 12:11](#) THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD,
 AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES?’”

- Both Matthew and Mark reflect that Psalm 118 attributes this rejection to God Himself
 - The leaders purposed in the their hearts to conspire against Jesus
 - And their conspiracy ultimately resulted in Jesus’ murder at the hands of the Romans
 - But the prophecies found in Psalm 118 specifically credits God with this plan
 - That God desired that His Son be rejected, though in the end He was restored and made the chief cornerstone
- And the psalmist’s reaction to this plan was sheer amazement
 - He says isn’t this marvelous in our eyes?
 - Isn’t it amazing that God was willing to see His only Son rejected in this way and put to death so that He could save so many?
- Following the quote from the Psalm, Jesus offers an application for the crowd’s benefit
 - Everyone who falls on the stone will be broken and everyone on whom it falls will be scattered like dust
 - There are two possible outcomes for those who encounter this chief cornerstone
 - On the one hand, a person can fall on the stone
 - And they will be broken
 - To fall on the stone is to be broken spiritually

- As in having a broken and contrite spirit

- Like Psalm 34 when it says:

[Psa. 34:17](#) *The righteous cry, and the LORD hears
And delivers them out of all their troubles.*

[Psa. 34:18](#) *The LORD is near to the brokenhearted
And saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

[Psa. 51:17](#) *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.*

[Is. 66:2](#) *“For My hand made all these things,
Thus all these things came into being,” declares the LORD.
“But to this one I will look,
To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.*

- The other possible reaction to the stone is to remain resolute and proud and unrepentant
- And that person will be crushed by the stone
- They will not survive their encounter with Christ

[Job 40:12](#) *“Look on everyone who is proud, and humble him,
And tread down the wicked where they stand.*

[Is. 2:12](#) ¶ *For the LORD of hosts will have a day of reckoning
Against everyone who is proud and lofty
And against everyone who is lifted up,
That he may be abased.*

- And Jesus’ use of this Psalm only serves to add insult to injury for the Pharisees

[Luke 20:19](#) ¶ *The scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour, and they feared the people; for they understood that He spoke this parable against them.*

[Luke 20:20](#) *So they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that they might catch Him in some statement, so that they could deliver Him to the rule and the authority of the governor.*

- Remember last week I mentioned that the leaders of Israel had a dilemma when it came to dealing with Jesus

- No doubt they hated Him and viewed Him as a threat to their power and influence in the nation
 - And they wanted nothing more than to kill Him
- But as I said, they had no real power to carry out that sentence
 - The Pharisees could only take action against Jesus through the force of the Roman army or through mob violence by inciting the crowds
 - Since Rome had not yet decided that Jesus was a threat and the crowds largely adored Jesus, the Pharisees could only wait and bide their time
- So their plan was two-fold
 - First they continued to observe Jesus using spies in the hope they could gather evidence to accuse Him
 - Secondly, with evidence in hand, they would look for an opportunity to get Jesus alone away from the protection of the crowds
 - Then He could be taken prisoner and brought before the Roman authorities
 - And so this became their plan
- Their first attempt to trick Jesus so as to make an accusation is recorded in the next series of verses

[Luke 20:21](#) They questioned Him, saying, “Teacher, we know that You speak and teach correctly, and You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth.

[Luke 20:22](#) “Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?”

- Of all the ways the Pharisees had devised to trick Jesus, this may well be the most devious
 - Its simplicity belies its ingenious quality
 - It’s almost a perfect trap...almost
 - And to fully appreciate how crafty this question was, we first need to consult the other Gospels to gain a little additional detail

- In Matt and Mark we learn this:

[Mark 12:13](#) ¶ Then they *sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Him in order to trap Him in a statement.

- The key to understanding the deviousness of this scheme is in the fact that it was devised by Pharisees and Herodians
 - These were essentially two political groups within Israel
 - Since Israel a country ruled according to a religious law, the politicians of the days were religious leaders
 - But like any political system, you had factions or parties that each represented different political points of view within the spectrum of religious thought
 - So here we see two of those parties, who happened to be polar opposites in their political points of view
 - The Pharisees represented the conservative wing of Israel
 - They were opposed to any foreign rule in Israel
 - They would never willingly give any credit or honor to Caesar, the Roman emperor
 - The Herodians took their name from the Herod family, the ruling dynasty over Israel that cooperated with Rome
 - They supported Roman rule and did not hold as strictly to the law
 - They promoted acts of honor to Caesar
 - For all their differences, these two groups could agree on one point: they both hated Jesus
 - The Pharisees hated Him because Jesus had rejected their rules and authority within the nation of Israel
 - The Herodians saw Jesus' claims to be King and Messiah as a threat to Herod's rule
 - So they come together and form this near perfect trap

- The trap worked like this:
 - First, they pretend to be on His side
 - In verse 21 they say flattering things to put Jesus at ease
 - You know how this works, right?
 - By throwing flattering words at someone, you hope they will lower their guard a little
 - And then you might get a more revealing answer
 - They hoped Jesus would be more willing to speak His mind freely in answering their questions, and thereby fall into their trap
 - Of course, their plan was already doomed to fail because they overlooked two facts about the Messiah
 - First, He could know their thoughts, regardless of their words
 - Secondly, Jesus never spoke anything that wasn't 100% true, so no matter how they prefaced their question, they would get the same answer
 - No amount of buttering up was going to result in any more revealing answer
 - But they weren't going to like the truth
- The next step in the plan was to ask Jesus to rule on a point of contention in that day
 - Should they pay the tribute tax to Caesar
 - Luke's version simply says taxes, but the word in Greek literally means tribute
 - This was the tribute tax, which is kind of offering to Caesar
 - Remember, the emperor of Rome declared Himself to be God
 - And like any God, He expected tributes or offerings
 - So Rome expected people to pay tribute to the Caesar

- So for anyone to say that Jews should pay this tax was equivalent to recognizing Roman rule over Israel and Caesar's claim to be god
 - So many in Israel, including the Pharisees would never willingly accept such a result
 - And they would have strongly objected to anyone advocating for it
 - If Jesus had said pay the tribute tax, it would also mean that Jesus was acknowledging Caesar to be the rightful king and god over Israel
 - This would have resulted in the Jesus losing all credibility with the crowds around him, leaving Him vulnerable to the Pharisees
 - So If Jesus says pay the tax, the Pharisees can make a case against Him and they would gain the support of the crowds to stone Jesus
 - On the other hand, if Jesus were to say not to pay the tribute tax, he would be advising insurrection against Roman rule
 - This would have pleased the crowd and the Pharisees, but it would have angered the Herodians
 - They would have had an instant case against Jesus in front of the governor
 - In fact, later in Luke 23 these same men will lie during Jesus' trial claiming that Jesus was forbidding the crowds from paying tax to Caesar
 - So if Jesus says don't pay, then the religious leaders can expect the support of the Roman army to suppress Jesus' ministry
- Remember, there were only two sources of power that the Pharisees could draw upon in the hope of destroying Jesus
 - One was the people and the other was the Roman army
 - So one way or the other, this question seemed destined to get Jesus in trouble with one group or the other

- So how does He answer

[Luke 20:23](#) But He detected their trickery and said to them,

[Luke 20:24](#) “Show Me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?” They said, “Caesar’s.”

[Luke 20:25](#) And He said to them, “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

[Luke 20:26](#) And they were unable to catch Him in a saying in the presence of the people; and being amazed at His answer, they became silent.

- Naturally, Jesus saw through the scheme
 - So he calls for someone to bring a denarius
 - Again, the other Gospel accounts prove helpful here in filling in some details that Luke left out
 - In both Matt and Mark’s account we learn that when Jesus called for the denarius, someone had to go get one
 - Meaning, they didn’t immediately have one available
 - Remember, they are in the temple so the only currency accepted would have been the coin of the Israel
 - But outside the Temple, the coin of the realm was the denarius
 - So after they bring the coin to Jesus, he asks his famous question
 - Who’s picture is on the coin?
 - The obviously answer is Caesar’s
 - The denarius was about a day’s wage and it had the picture of Caesar on it
 - Since it had the face of a man on it, the Pharisees were not allowed to carry it, since it would be considered idolatry under their law
 - This is why no one had one nearby
 - But this also meant that no Jew living under the Pharisaical rule could use the coin for commerce

- Now obviously, many Jews did, but the strict Pharisees would never think to use the coin
 - To even hold it was idolatry, so if one was to come into their possession, the only thing they were allowed to do according to their law was return it to Caesar
- The irony here is remarkable
 - The Pharisees refused to pay tax to Caesar because it was seen as supporting Roman rule
 - And they refused to take part in Caesar economy, which meant they wouldn't use Caesar's money
 - So by their own rules, the only logical thing to do was return the money to Caesar, since it meant nothing to them
 - It was worthless to a Pharisee – they refused to use it to do business
 - It shouldn't even be inside Israel's borders
 - But they couldn't pay the tribute tax with Jewish coins
 - So if a denarius were to come into a Pharisee's possession, the only thing they could do with it was return it to Caesar
 - He was the rightful owner of it
 - So when Jesus says render to Caesar what is Caesar's
 - Apodidomi - render - literally means give back
 - Give it back to him and you aren't paying Him tribute, because you are giving Caesar something you consider to be worthless
 - It can't be a tribute if you give something you consider to be worthless
 - Travel to a foreign country and return with foreign coins
 - Give to the church?
- Then Jesus says we should give to God what is God's
 - So what is Jesus talking about here?

- In their midst was a king deserving of tribute as well
 - A king sent from God
 - And like Caesar who received tribute from those who considered him to be God
 - The king in their presence was deserving of tribute appropriate for God
- What kind of tribute is appropriate for this king?
 - Render to God what is God's
 - Give back to Go what we have that is His
- This certainly includes the concept of giving of our money
 - But it has a much wider application

[Rom. 12:1](#) ¶ Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship.*

- It's not enough to give God our money and feel as though we've done our part
 - It's like the person who is too self-absorbed to give the kids any time, so they pays someone else to take them to the park
 - It won't suffice
 - Peter says it this way:

[1Pet. 2:4](#) ¶ And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God,

[1Pet. 2:5](#) you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

- Jesus is expecting that of the crowd and of you and I today
 - If we recognize that Jesus is God as He proved Himself to be,
 - And since He saved us from the destruction we were rightly due,

- Then He rightly demands our complete obedience dedication to His glory
 - Give back to God what is God's
- With this answer, Luke says in verse 26 that Jesus puts them all to silence
 - I think we may be so familiar with this story and how it ends that overlook how stunned the crowd was by this answer
 - It was like Jesus just solved some unsolvable problem
 - He just proposed a cure for the common cold
 - This had been a question ever since Rome conquered Israel
 - And in one moment, Jesus had pushed the issue aside
 - The Pharisees and the Herodians had proposed an either/or kind of problem
 - And Jesus had responded with an both/and solution
 - And in the process, He had succeeded in making the Pharisees look foolish for having objected to paying the tax
 - When their own rules essentially required it
 - And of course, there was no ground for making an accusation
 - And on top of it all, Jesus had only increased His reputation among the crowd
- The artful way Jesus dismissed these two political groups for the last time, leaves two remaining major political groups to take a stab at bringing down Jesus
 - Next up to bat is the Sadducees to take their best shot at Jesus
 - Remember we are still looking at the way Jesus was inspected before the Passover sacrifice
 - As the Passover lamb for Israel, Jesus was to be inspected just as the Passover lamb to see if there were any imperfection

- That's the process we're watching here
- And so far, two of the four major groups have fallen
- Today we are going to read the riddle that the Sadducees propose to Jesus and introduce their purpose
 - But we will wait until next week to finish it entirely

[Luke 20:27](#) ¶ Now there came to Him some of the Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection),

[Luke 20:28](#) and they questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN'S BROTHER DIES, having a wife, AND HE IS CHILDLESS, HIS BROTHER SHOULD MARRY THE WIFE AND RAISE UP CHILDREN TO HIS BROTHER.

[Luke 20:29](#) "Now there were seven brothers; and the first took a wife and died childless;

[Luke 20:30](#) and the second

[Luke 20:31](#) and the third married her; and in the same way all seven died, leaving no children.

[Luke 20:32](#) "Finally the woman died also.

[Luke 20:33](#) "In the resurrection therefore, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had married her."

- As Luke describes the scene, he begins by acknowledging the Sadducees distinguishing characteristic
 - They didn't believe in resurrection
 - They felt that when the body died, all that remained was the spirit
 - They expected that the future state of man in the kingdom was a spirit only experience
 - This was not the only difference between the Sadducees and the Pharisees, but it was probably the most notable
 - Beyond even their theological differences, the Pharisees and the Sadducees were political adversaries much like Democrats and Republicans today
 - In other words, they took great delight in coming up with ways to make the other group look foolish
 - And since the Pharisees were the scrupulous, uptight rule making, rule enforcing right wing extremists of their day

- And the Sadducees were the more liberal, rule-adverse group,
- You can see who usually got the better of the other
 - I tend to think of the Odd Couple
 - Oscar and Felix
 - So the Sadducees took great delight in making fun of the Pharisees and their many stupid rules and contradictions within their laws
- One way they did that was to contrive these bizarre questions which the Pharisees could never answer
 - And because they couldn't answer them, it left the Pharisees looking foolish
 - The point of the question was not so much to catch someone in making a mistake or committing a crime
 - Rather it was designed to discredit someone and make them look foolish
 - So the Sadducees come to Jesus with this same goal in mind when they pose the question in the next verses in Luke