

April 25: Luke 20-21

Chapter 20

Vs. 1-26, Jesus continues to teach in the Temple, even though the religious leadership are actively seeking ways to get rid of him. The religious leaders are afraid of the mob, Jerusalem is packed to capacity, it would not take much for a riot to break out. Jesus tells the crowd the parable of the vineyard. The vineyard is a common Old Testament image for God's people, Israel. God has sent prophet after prophet to the people, and the religious and political leaders have rejected God's messengers. Now God has sent the Son, and they are plotting to kill him to maintain the status quo. This parable, as all parables, is a story that conveys a truth. Unfortunately this parable has been used as a justification for violence against Jews. This is absolutely not what Jesus intended. The scribes and chief priests realized that Jesus had told this parable against them and became even more incensed than they had been before.

The religious leaders next sent spies to try to catch Jesus in the act of treason, but Jesus outwitted them with his famous line "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's."

Vs. 27-47, The Sadducees continue to try to trap Jesus, but Jesus engages them in classical Jewish theological discourse. They describe a scene of a woman who has married 7 brothers through the practice of Levirate marriage. The Sadducees did not believe in resurrection, while the Pharisees did. Jesus states that in the resurrection we will not be married, but rather we will all stand before God as God's children, worshipping day and night along with the angels. Jesus states definitively that the patriarchs are alive with God, even before Jesus is resurrected. God's timeline does not work the same way our human time works.

Chapter 21

Jesus now preaches perhaps his most controversial message: the apocalypse. The Temple will be destroyed, Jerusalem and Judea will be surrounded by Gentile armies, there will be great distress among the nations and even in creation itself (earthquakes, plagues, famine). Vs. 12-19 describes the real persecution that Jesus' followers faced in the years of the early church, and perhaps the persecution we will yet face? Jesus urges courage and reliance on the Holy Spirit to give us the words to speak. This will be an event visible to the whole world as the Son of Man returns in glory. Though the events leading up to it are terrifying, the result is Christ's

return, for which we wait with longing. Jesus says, “Stand up and raise your heads, for your redemption is drawing near.” This apocalypse both describes real events that took place in the first century, and points to God’s future. Jesus urges us to be ready and stay persistent in prayer.

Jesus and his disciples were camping in the Mount of Olives during this time because at Passover Jerusalem’s guest accommodations were maxed out. Every day they slept outside and then returned to the Temple to teach and debate.
