

## Chapter Twenty (20:1-47)

### THE SON OF MAN SPEAKING TO THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES OF LIFE

#### IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Was Jesus dodging the issue of His authority by asking about John's baptism (20:1-8)?
2. Why did Jesus ask the Jews to interpret the parable of the wicked husbandmen (20:9-18; cf. Mt. 21:33-46; Mk. 12:1-12)?
3. What are the things a follower of Christ must "render to Caesar" (20:25)?
4. If there is no marriage in heaven, what kind of personal relationships will there be (20:34-40)?
5. Who is "my Lord" of David's Psalm (20:42)?

#### SECTION 1

#### Revelation and God (20:1-8)

**20** One day, as he was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up and said to him, "Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority." <sup>3</sup>He answered them, "I also will ask you a question; now tell me, <sup>4</sup>Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?" <sup>5</sup>And they discussed it with one another, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why did you not believe him?' <sup>6</sup>But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us; for they are convinced that John was a prophet." <sup>7</sup>So they answered that they did not know whence it was. <sup>8</sup>And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

**20:1-4 Summons:** Luke's chapter 20 documents part of the longest day recorded in the entire ministry of Jesus. Matthew gives more of the details of this Tuesday in Jerusalem than any of the other evangelists; almost one-sixth of Matthew's whole Gospel is taken up in recording this day. It is in Matthew 26:1, 2 we come to the end of Tuesday when Jesus says, "... after two days the Passover is coming," or, "... day after tomorrow the Passover is coming." Consider the following list of events which took place on this Tuesday:

- a. Jesus' Authority Challenged (Mt. 21:23-27; Mk. 11:27-33; Lk. 20:1-8)
- b. The Parable of the Two Sons (Mt. 21:28-32; Mk. 12:1a)
- c. The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen (Mt. 21:33-46; Mk. 12:1b-12; Lk. 20:9-19)

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- d. The Parable of the Marriage of the King's Son (Mt. 22:14)
- e. Catch Question About Giving Tribute to Caesar (Mt. 22:15-22; Mk. 12:13-17; Lk. 20:20-26)
- f. Catch Question About the Resurrection (Mt. 22:23-33; Mk. 12:18-27; Lk. 20:27-39)
- g. Catch Question About the Greatest Commandment (Mt. 22:34-40; Mk. 12:28-34; Lk. 20:40)
- h. Christ's Questions About David's Lord (Mt. 22:41-46; Mk. 12:35-37; Lk. 20:41-44)
- i. Warning to His disciples (Mt. 23:1-12; Mk. 12:38-40; Lk. 20:45-47)
- j. Sevenfold warning to the Pharisees (Mt. 23:13-36)
- k. Lamenting over Jerusalem (Mt. 23:37-39)
- l. Commending a Poor Widow's Gift (Mk. 12:41-44; Lk. 21:1-4)
- m. Reflecting About the Coming of the Greeks (Jn. 12:20-36)
- n. The Sinful Unbelief of the Jews (Jn. 12:37-43)
- o. Jesus Summarizes His Own Message and Mission (Jn. 12:44-50)
- p. Discourse on the Destruction of Jerusalem (Mt. 24:1-34; Mk. 13:1-30; Lk. 21:5-32)
- q. Discourse on the End of the World (Mt. 24:35-51; Mk. 13:31-37; Lk. 21:33-36)
- r. More about the End of the World and Judgment (Mt. 25:1-46)
- s. General statements as to His death (Mt. 26:1, 2; Mk. 14:1; Lk. 21:37, 38; Jn. 13:1)

The physical and, especially, the emotional stress of such a day was no doubt exhausting to even a strong person like Jesus. It was a day when the political and religious leadership of the nation threw at Him all the pressure and craftiness they could muster to trap Him in some mistake by which they might turn the multitudes against Him. It was a day when the weight of His knowledge of the terrible future of His people pressed heaviest upon His heart. It was a day when the exasperating ignorance of His own disciples had to be patiently dealt with again. It was a day when He was vividly reminded of His vicarious atonement for the sins of the whole world when the Greeks sought Him. It was an emotionally charged and intellectually exhausting day.

The day started with an official summons by the chief priests, scribes and elders that He should produce some credentials for the authority He had assumed the day before in driving money-changers and merchants out of the Temple! Furthermore, He is challenged to give reason why He should have acquired such a massive following of people praising Him as the Son of David, etc. This challenge of Jesus' authority is not an honest one. As the religious leaders of the nation they were obligated to honestly challenge any desecration of the Temple or violation of the laws of Moses. But Jesus had done neither. The chief priests and scribes were the guilty

ones. The timing of this challenge from the authorities betrays the fact that it was not an honest effort to protect the sanctity of God's house but a scheme to discredit Jesus motivated by envy and hatred. Jesus had cleansed the Temple three years earlier (Jn. 2:13-22) and for three years had been demonstrating His authority (by miracles and fulfilling prophecies) to do so. There had been three full years of publicly demonstrated authority by which they should have accepted Him as Lord of the Temple—if the authorities had been asking an honest question, they had the answer. There was, in fact, no need for the question to be asked!

The real reason for the challenge was the way in which Jesus' righteous actions had intimidated and humiliated these so-called guardians of the faith in the eye of the public. They could not defend their exploitation of the house of God and to "cover up" they tried to turn the attack upon Jesus. Jesus put the onus right back upon them by recalling their ridicule and defiance of John the Baptist. They had "rejected the baptism of John" and thus rejected for themselves the counsel of God (Lk. 7:30). In a master stroke Jesus exposed their dishonesty by answering, "I also will ask you a question; Now tell me, was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?"

**20:5-8 Silenced:** These rulers immediately recognized they were on the horns of a dilemma. That, in itself, betrayed them as hypocrites. They knew how they *should* answer, but were grasping for a way to hide their dishonesty. If they answered: "John's baptism was from God. . . ." they acknowledged the revelatory nature of John's message and condemned themselves as opposing God's testimony through John the Baptist that Jesus was the Messiah. If they answered "John's baptism was not from God. . . ." they alienated the populace which had acclaimed John a "prophet of God." So, they said, "We do not know." But that answer did not solve their dilemma—it only exposed their guilt. Their answer was really a confession that they were in opposition to John's message and mission. If they could have proved John the Baptist was *not* from God they would have declared it. To stand there in the presence of the righteous Jesus, with all their knowledge (they had investigated the ministry of John the Baptist many times, Jn. 1:19ff.; 3:25ff.; Mt. 3:7ff.; Lk. 7:24-35), and say they "did not know" showed them to be either the dumbest people in Israel or the most blatant liars!

Jesus specifically asked these rulers about John's authority for immersing (baptizing) people rather than John's teaching because of the uniqueness of the act of immersing people in water unto repentance for the forgiveness of sin (Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3). There could be no quibbling or hedging with this question. Baptism was a concrete, vivid *impressive act*. No one could say, "What teaching?" Immersion of the entire individual in water for the remission of sins was doctrinally innovative. The law of Moses proscribed animal sacrifices for atonement. The issue was crucial—what

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right had John the Baptist to add to the Old Testament law such a commandment for the remission of sins? He had the right only if his commission came directly by revelation from God! The Jews knew nothing of the practice of baptism as John initiated it (see our discussion in Luke 3:1-6). The only logical and honest conclusion was either to accept John's ministry and message as a divine revelation from God or prove John to be an imposter. These rulers refused to take a stand either way and thus proved themselves to be imposters:

They were dishonest about John; they were dishonest with Jesus. Jesus refused to declare Himself to men incapable of honesty. What good would it have done? Jesus refused to declare Himself to these men because:

- a. This approach (letting the logic of His challenge about John speak for itself) lets the crowds see more clearly the hypocrisy and dishonesty of their leaders. The multitudes could not hope to save themselves until the stranglehold of these rulers over their thinking was broken.
- b. Jesus had already forced them to answer their own question. John the Baptist had testified Jesus was the Messiah. They would not discredit John (could not), so they actually were forced to admit Jesus had authority to cleanse the Temple and teach what He taught.
- c. They were not asking for information, but for evil purposes—they did not deserve to have the truth just to pervert it and use it for wickedness. If they were blind to the evidence of John's credentials, they would be blind to Jesus' credentials. It was wilful blindness and dishonesty—Jesus treated it as such—it was useless for Him to do otherwise.

Jesus proceeds to teach three parables in which He condemns their methods and their motives. These parables focus on the disobedience of the Jewish religious leaders. Only one of the parables is recorded by Luke—the parable of the wicked husbandmen, Lk. 20:9-19. The other two, the parable of the two sons and the parable of the king's marriage feast for his son are recorded in Matthew's account only (Mt. 21:28-32 and Mt. 22:1-14).

### SECTION 2

#### Responsibility to Grace (20:9-19)

9 And he began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, and let it out to tenants, and went into another country for a long while. <sup>10</sup>When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, that they should give him some of the fruit of the vineyard; but the tenants

beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. <sup>11</sup>And he sent another servant; him also they beat and treated shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. <sup>12</sup>And he sent yet a third; this one they wounded and cast out. <sup>13</sup>Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; it may be they will respect him.' <sup>14</sup>But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.' <sup>15</sup>And they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? <sup>16</sup>He will come and destroy those tenants, and give the vineyard to others.' When they heard this, they said, "God forbid!" <sup>17</sup>But he looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written:

'The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner'?

<sup>18</sup>Every one who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but when it falls on any one it will crush him."

<sup>19</sup>The scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on him at that very hour, but they feared the people; for they perceived that he had told this parable against them.

**20:9-15 The Parable:** The figure of a vine and a vineyard to portray God's chosen people was well known to the Jews. The Old Testament is rich in such imagery (cf. Psa. 80:8-18; Isa. 5:1-10; Jer. 2:21; 6:9; 8:13; 12:10; Ezek. 15:1-8; 19:10-14; Hosea 10:1). The grapevine was considered by some Jews to be the symbol of the Jewish nation. Herod had an ornate and expensive golden grapevine embossed on the great and beautiful gate of the Temple. The grape was the most important crop in the land of Palestine and the entire Mediterranean area at that time. The vineyard was usually planted on a hill; protected from animals and thieves by hedges, rock-fences and watch towers. Wine was the chief by-product of the grape harvest and wine presses and vats were built right into the vineyards and there the juice was squeezed out by the ancient method of human feet tramping on the gathered grapes. Often Jewish farmers merely rented or "share-cropped" the vineyards. While the farmer did all the labor, he was obligated to pay the owner of the vineyard a fixed amount, usually one-third or one-fourth whether the harvest was large or small. Jesus was using an illustration here in the realm of Jewish literature, of everyday life, and relating to the symbol of their national life. This parable is also recorded in Mt. 21:33-46 and Mk. 12:1-12. It should be plain that the owner of the vineyard is God; the tenants are the Jewish people; the three servants the owner sent to collect some of the fruit of the vineyard represent the prophets of old; the heir is Jesus Christ, the Son. Jesus infers in this parable that the Jewish people (especially the religious and political leaders) recognized the "heir" well enough to decide to kill Him!

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**20:16-19 The Point:** This parable tells about some tenants or stewards who took things into their own hands as soon as the Landlord left them alone, and when the Landlord sent servants to collect the rent, the tenants showed their rebellion by treating the servants shamefully. When the Landlord sent His Son, they killed Him. Redding says: "This skit has caught man red-handed in his most characteristic crime—playing God." The parable of the two sons teaches or exposes the hypocritical disobedience of the Jews; this parable of the wicked husbandmen foretells the fierce wrath of God upon disobedient tenants. This parable is really a tragic conclusion to Isaiah's vineyard parable (Isa. 5:1-11). The Jews had many opportunities and privileges following Isaiah's exposé of Israel's disobedience—even the Son of the vineyard's Owner had now come—but the workers still were disobedient. This parable re-enforces Jesus' manifestation of authority over the Jewish nation in the cleansing of the Temple by its declaration that He has come to *demand* fruit from them (repentance), and that He is the Son.

The Jewish nation had been blessed above all the nations of the earth, not because they deserved it, but because of God's sovereign grace. He blessed them for a purpose—that purpose was that they might produce a people (harvest) of righteousness (cf. Amos 3:2; Deut. 26:19; 28:9-10, etc.). But they wanted to have what God gave them for themselves and produce nothing for Him. There is strong emphasis in this parable on the grace, and long-suffering of God. The most touching picture of God's love is the sending of His Son to plead with these criminals. But these wicked workers wanted the whole "vineyard" for themselves (Mt. 21:38; Mk. 12:7; Lk. 20:14). It is true to life every day that man undertakes to take possession of his own life and the whole universe and tries to cast the Owner out. God is Owner, never forget that! (Ex. 19:5; I Chron. 29:14; Psa. 24:1ff.; 50:10-12; Jer. 27:5, etc.). He cannot be cast out!

Matthew notes that Jesus asked His audience, "When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" They said to Him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits of their seasons." Luke adds, "When they heard this, they said, God forbid." How masterful the Great Teacher's method: He compels them to come to the only right and just conclusion and thus to judge themselves. As the truth of it all began to destroy the facade of their pretensions, they said, "Let it not be!" The Greek text has *Me genoito*, "God" is not in the original text—it is an English translation.

No truth is more plain in the Bible: The patience of God can be exhausted with impenitent men. There is a limit even to Divine grace. After the wicked husbandmen refused to acknowledge the Son and killed Him, no more

mercy could be shown. Why? Because God has reached the limits of what He can do and still leave man a free moral being. If men will kill the Incarnate Word, what else can God do? Man committed the greatest of crimes against God by rejecting Jesus Christ, His Son. The Jews, Jesus said, "filled up the measure of their fathers" (Mt. 23:29-39) and "finished the transgression" (Dan. 9:24), and were guilty of all murder from Abel to Christ.

Jesus had led this audience to the inexorable logic that God was going to reject the "wicked husbandmen." They knew who these husbandmen were! They cried out, "May it never happen!" Jesus then plainly declared that the wicked husbandmen were the Jewish nation which would reject its Messiah. Their rejection of the "corner stone" had been predicted by the Old Testament. Jesus quoted Psalm 118:22. In its original context the verse refers to the covenant nation, the Jews. God had chosen them to be the *typical* corner-stone in His preliminary redemptive program—but the heathen world rejected that. And while this Psalm had typical and symbolic application to the nation Israel, its ultimate reference, even when it was written, was to the Messiah Himself. The prediction of Isaiah the prophet (Isa. 28:16) indicates that it was not the nation Israel which was the ultimate "stone . . . the builders" would reject, for it would be the "builders" themselves (the rulers of Israel) who would reject the "precious cornerstone." God was laying by prophecy and type that stone even in Isaiah's day. Who else could that be but the Suffering Servant whom they would despise (Cf. Isa. 52:13—53:12). It may be, as Hobbs says, some Jewish scribes interpreted Psalm 118:22 as teaching the Messiah would be rejected by the builders and later become the stone which would join together two walls, but most modern Jewish interpretations of this verse applies the "stone" to national Israel, *only*. *Socino Commentary* (Jewish) on Psa. 118:22: ". . . Israel, despised by neighborly peoples, has been appointed by God to have an essential function to discharge in the construction of His kingdom on earth." cf. *Isaiah, Vol. III*, pgs. 277-280, by Paul T. Butler, College Press for notes on Jewish interpretation of the nation as the Messiah.

The "builders" (rulers of Israel) had been "rejecting" the messianic concept all the time God had been "laying" it! They rejected God's messengers, the prophets. These prophets kept insisting that a personal, humble, righteous, atoning, but suffering Messiah would come to rule in the minds and affairs of God's covenant people. The leaders of Israel kept on rejecting that teaching and those who taught it. They even killed some of the prophets who predicted such a Messiah. However obscure this passage may have been to the Jewish mind (more because of their own prejudice than its vagueness), Jesus fully expected the Jews of His day to have read it and understood it as applying to the Messiah. Matthew writes that Jesus said

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here, "Have you never read in the scriptures: The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. . . ." It is significant that there is no text of the Old Testament more frequently quoted (6 or 7 times word for word) or paraphrased in the New Testament. That the Messiah (Jesus Christ) was God's "key-stone" is thoroughly documented in the Bible (cf. Psa. 118:22; Isa. 28:16; Zech. 4:7; 10:4; Isa. 8:14; Acts 4:11; I Pet. 2:6, 7; Eph. 2:20; Rom. 9:33). The "key-stone" of man's relationship to God is a Person, Jesus, not a religious system.

The term, "head of the corner" is an interesting term. The "head of the corner" is the "key-stone" to an arch. In olden days, the procedure for building an archway out of stone was to construct the two sides first and the final, critical stone to be placed into the arch was last, at the very center or apex of the rise (much like the great metal Arch was constructed in St. Louis, Missouri, a few years ago). This is the stone which is absolutely necessary for the completion of the "corner" or arch. Without this stone being put in place the whole archway falls. The arch was a fundamental architectural support for buildings, aqueducts, bridges and other construction of that day. The Jews cast the key-stone out and their building collapsed and The Stone destroyed them. When they cast off the crucial Stone to their becoming God's "building," they both stumbled over Him to their own destruction (cf. I Cor. 1:18-25) and He fell on them and crushed out their existence (cf. Dan. 2:44, 45; Lk. 21:5-33). Jesus plainly told this audience that the kingdom of God would be taken from the Jews and given to a *nation* producing the fruits of it (cf. Mt. 21:43). This "nation" would be the *new Israel*, composed of both Jew and Gentile, which would listen to the messianic message and believe (cf. Acts 13:46-48; 28:28). The new Israel would be a "new creation" (cf. Gal. 6:15, 16; II Cor. 5:11-21). The Jewish people had been offered the grace of God through the promised Messiah, but they killed their Messiah, and spurned God's grace. God had given them the privilege to work in His vineyard as husbandmen, but they felt no responsibility or gratitude to His graciousness and greedily schemed to take over God's vineyard for themselves. There is a great lesson here for all who have now been called by grace into the *new Israel*. Let no Christian presume to take over God's vineyard. His kingdom (the church) belongs entirely to Him. No men have ever been enthroned to rule over His kingdom. All men are servants—some faithful and some unfaithful. "Wild olive branches" grafted into the Tree, may as easily be broken off and thrown away as the natural branches were, if the wild ones become proud and arrogant (cf. Rom. 11:17-24). Indifference to the grace of God extended in Jesus Christ will be punished eternally. This is a fundamental issue of life.

There was no doubt in the minds of the chief priests and scribes as to the object of Jesus' condemnation. And He had condemned them from



their own Scriptures! They “perceived” that He had told this parable “against them.” The word against is *pros* in Greek and means “toward, at.” In other words, Jesus told this parable and it pointed directly at the rulers. Instead of contrition, repentance and seeking forgiveness, they tried to lay hands on Jesus right there. Apparently they made some overt move to take Jesus bodily and were prevented from doing so by the threats of the crowds listening intently to Jesus’ searching parable. These crowds had just proclaimed Jesus “the Son of David.” They would have assaulted the scribes and chief priests had they tried to arrest Him there. The rulers, afraid of the people, craftily postponed temporarily what they fully intended to do later. And in the meantime, they decided to confront Him with hard, “catch” questions which they hoped would destroy His image before the people. They planned to trap Jesus into giving an answer to a political or theological question which would make Him appear to be a seditionist, a traitor or a blasphemer. If they could do this, they could sway the multitudes into joining them in demanding His crucifixion.

### SECTION 3

#### Religion and Government (20:20-26)

<sup>20</sup>So they watched him, and sent spies, who pretended to be sincere, that they might take hold of what he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor. <sup>21</sup>They asked him, “Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God. <sup>22</sup>Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?” <sup>23</sup>But he perceived their craftiness, and said to them, <sup>24</sup>“Show me a coin. Whose likeness and inscription has it?” They said, “Caesar’s.” <sup>25</sup>He said to them, “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” <sup>26</sup>And they were not able in the presence of the people to catch him by what he said; but marveling at his answer they were silent.

**20:20-22 Subtlety:** Jesus told the parable of the marriage feast (Mt. 22:1-14) before the Jewish rulers could regain their composure enough to start questioning Him. Soon after He finished this parable, they were ready with their question. The Pharisees had gone to discuss among themselves (Mt. 22:15) and join with the Herodians (Mt. 22:16; Mk. 12:13) to devise a plan of attack upon Jesus. The “Herodians” were influential men who were politically aligned with the Herod family in its campaign to retain the Jewish throne and to Romanize the Jewish culture. The Pharisees, of course, were philosophically in direct opposition to the Herodians. But they were true pragmatists when it came to any threat to their own

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popularity. Jesus posed a crucial threat to Pharisaic influence, so the Pharisees would compromise their vows and convictions and join with the hated Herodians to destroy Jesus. All three gospel writers positively state the motives of the questioners in this first question as "entrapment," in order to get Jesus indicted by the Roman governor (Procurator). Matthew uses the Greek word *pagideusosin* which means literally, "that which grips, binds or snares," (Mt. 22:15). Luke says they sent "spies" (Gr. *egkathetous*, "those who hide in the bushes awaiting their prey"). They were probably some Pharisees they thought would not be recognized by Jesus. This group pretended (Gr. *hupokrinomenous*, "play a part, act, pretend" or "hypocrite") to be sincere (Gr. *dikaious*, "just or righteous"). What they said flatteringly about Jesus' honesty and candidness was true. No doubt they said it grudgingly, but they also said it with malice aforethought. They intended to seduce Him with flattery. Flattery is a dangerous thing both for the flatterer and the recipient. Flattery ". . . works ruin" (Prov. 26:28); "it does not help the flatterer" (Prov. 28:23); it is "exploitative" (Dan. 11:21-34; Prov. 29:5; Jude 16). Flattery should never be a part of Christian methods! (I Thess. 2:5). Jesus did not succumb to it.

This group was sure they had the perfect trap for Jesus. They asked Him one of the most loaded questions they could have asked at that time. It had both political and theological ramifications. They asked, "Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" Luke uses the Greek word, *phoron*, which means literally, "something brought to" Caesar, or a monetary tribute. Matthew and Mark use the word *kensois* from which we get the English word  *census* and meant in Jesus' day, "poll tax." There were many taxes the Jews had to pay. Taxation, and especially by a foreign oppressor, was a very sensitive subject. The Jews paid the following taxes in Jesus' time:

1. Tributum Soil - Roman land tax
2. Tributum Capitis - Roman poll tax
3. Annona - Grain and cattle for Roman military
4. Publicum - Customs, sales and salt tax for Roman government
5. Temple Tax - Jewish tax for support of Temple
6. Synagogue Tax - Jewish religious-education tax
7. Herod's Tax - Taxation for Herod's public works

At first Rome permitted the Jews to coin all their own money without the image of Caesar on it. But Herod Antipas forced the Jews to strike a coin with Caesar's image upon it as an act of political flattery to the Emperor. Patriotic Jews resented this bitterly as forced humiliation and as a sign of the erosion of their national sovereignty. It was also a theological question as to whether any faithful Jew should pay taxes to a government attempting to paganize Jewish culture. The issue was highly volatile! The silver denarius was the tribute required of every Israelite by Rome. The inscription on

this coin read: "Tiberius Caesar, Emperor, Son of Divine Augustus, The Illustrious High Priest." When the Law of Moses was given there was no such circumstance for the Jews and so the Law said nothing about this. The Jews did pay tribute to foreign governments many times (cf. II Kings 17:3; 18:13-16; 23:33; II Chron. 28:21) before their captivities. They certainly paid taxes to the foreign governments in whose lands they dwelt during their captivities. And the Biblical record also documents that they paid tribute to foreign governments after their captivities and their return to Palestine (cf. Ezra 4:13). They certainly did not like it—they detested it. But tribute to Caesar was nothing new!

**20:23-26 Skill:** Jesus does not fall into the trap of flattery. He demonstrates the very wisdom and courage they tried to use as flattery. He does not allow Himself to be impaled on the horns of their supposed dilemma. They think if He says, "Yes, pay tribute to Caesar" they will be able to justly indict Him for being a traitor to His own nation. They think if He says, "No, pay no tribute to Caesar," they will be able to get Him indicted as a seditionist against Rome. They apparently hoped He would say "No," because at His trial they accused Him (by lying) of forbidding to pay tribute to Caesar (Lk. 23:2). Jesus knew their malicious intentions and very skillfully corrects their question. They said, "give" (Greek, *dounai*); Jesus said, "pay" (Greek, *apodote*). Taxes to government are *paid* for the value of services received. Taxes are "dues" (Rom. 13:7) for services of enforcement of law and order and protection of inalienable human rights. There are two fundamental, inalienable (non-revocable) human rights granted by the Creator to all human beings: the sanctity of human life and the right to own property. These are sanctioned by the Bible itself from the very beginning. God had ordained the structures of human governments to protect those two basic rights by enforcement of restraint or capital punishment or restitution on evil doers and the approval of right-doers (cf. Rom. 13:1-7). No real conflict existed at the time of Jesus between the obligations of the Jews to God and Caesar since the Roman government permitted the Jews complete freedom to worship God as God had revealed and the Roman government maintained proper sanctions (laws) against murder and theft and enforced them. Thus Rome was carrying out, relatively, what God had ordained human governments to do—maintain law and order. The Romans had even allowed the Jews liberal measures of self-government. Jesus' answer, "Pay the things of Caesar to Caesar, and the things of God to God," is perfect—broad enough to meet the need of any circumstance in which the believer may find himself.

Old Testament political theory and practice is more liberal than the traditions of the scribes. It may be summarized as follows:

- a. The Jews were obligated by the Law of Moses to support their theocratic government by offerings and taxes (see Leviticus and Deuteronomy).

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- b. God decreed the Jews would have to support their demanded monarchy with taxes and military and civil service (I Sam. 8:9-18).
- c. The Old Testament prophets make it clear that God held all human governments (even pagan ones) responsible for maintenance of law and order, certain standards of morality, integrity to international treaties and sanctions (Isa. 10:5-19; 13-23; 36-39; Jer. 27:1-11; Dan. 4:27; 5:17-23; Amos 1:3-15, esp. 1:9; Obadiah 11-14, Esther, etc.).
- d. The Jews were told by the Lord to be subservient and not rebellious when they dwelt in the land of foreign people (Jer. 29:1-7). In fact, they were told to "seek the welfare" of those pagan lands in which they dwelt, and to pray for emperors and rulers (Ezra 6:10).
- e. Many Jews became important and influential officials in human governments (even in pagan ones), collecting taxes for pagan kings; Daniel and his three Hebrew companions; Nehemiah; Esther; Mordecai.
- f. Jews were commanded by the Law of Moses to enforce all kinds of sanctions, from capital punishment to personal restitutions for destruction of property. They had standing armies; fought wars against aggressors; assisted other nations in maintaining international law; and had a social welfare system built right into their religious and political structure.

The New Testament political theory and practice may be summarized as follows:

- a. In the New Testament Romans 13:1-7; I Pet. 2:13-17; I Tim. 1:8, 9; 2:1-4; Titus 3:1, 2 are the outstanding passages on the Christian and human government. In Romans 12, Paul discusses the "rendering unto God" that which belongs to Him. And in Romans 13:1-7, Paul discusses rendering unto "Caesar" that which belongs to him. The New Testament *commands* (not merely suggests) that Christians obey governments which fulfill the functions outlined in the references cited above. The two main functions of human government are the protection of human rights by the maintenance of law and order; public works for the common good of society.
- b. Rationality itself insists there must be structured governments for the very existence of human social order.

### (1) Axioms:

- (a) Law and its enforcement is necessary to the maintenance of social structure (cf. I Tim. 1:8, 9). If you doubt this just universalize anti-social behavior such as murder, robbery, rape, etc. What if there were no laws against these acts of social anarchy at all?

- (b) Where there are no sanctions (penalties) and where penalties are not executed (speedily), there really are no laws. Laws without penalties being executed are merely writings on paper (cf. Eccl. 8:11). This same principle applies to international laws!
  - (c) Punishment must fit the crime. To sustain the majesty of the law against murder, there must be capital punishment (cf. Ex. 21:12).
- c. Revelation from God in the Bible commands that there shall be human governments:
- (1) Government in general:
    - (a) Is ordained by God (Rom. 13:1-7; I Pet. 2:13-17; Titus 2:15—3:2; Ezra 7:26; Ex. 22:28; Prov. 24:21, 22; Jer. 27:5-7).
    - (b) Is originated for God to execute His wrath on evil doers (Rom. 13:3, 4); to restrain the lawless (I Tim. 1:8, 9); to provide peace and tranquility so the world may come to know God's truth (I Tim. 2:2-4). The very first commandment God gave Noah by which to start the human race all over again after the flood was the order for capital punishment as the penalty against murder (Gen. 9:6).
  - (2) Government on international level:
    - (a) Nations which stand for peace, justice and tranquility, must arm themselves and ally one with the other against aggressive invasions of powerless peoples—even by declaring and fighting war if necessary.
    - (b) There are no specific New Testament scriptures to this effect, except the example of Paul appealing to the government of Rome for protection against the Jewish countrymen who wanted to kill him unjustly. But there are many Old Testament scriptures—and God does not change His principles (cf. Gen. 14:21-24; Josh. 8:1-29; I Sam. 30:1-31; Eccl. 3:8; Jer. 48:10; Dan. 5:17-28; Obadiah 10-14; Amos 1:9).
    - (c) There were a number of individuals serving in human governments even as law-enforcers who were Christians in the New Testament: Cornelius, Sergius Paulus, Caesar's own household, Erastus, the Philippian jailor. John the Baptist told certain soldiers not to extort, but he did not tell them to resign from the army to please God.

Any discussion of Jesus' reply to the question of "tribute" usually brings up the problem of civil disobedience. Our clearest Biblical examples of civil disobedience are found in Acts 4:19-20; 5:20; Daniel 1 and 6; and Exodus 1 and 2 (Jochebed). It is clear that Paul and Jesus did not acquiesce in the face of illegal treatment (Acts 23:1-10; John 18:19-23). Paul's attitude

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toward governmental authority is indicated in his appealing to his Roman citizenship for *protection*, (Acts 16:37-40; 22:25-29; 26:32). Paul was so conscientious to maintain the proper structure to social order through human government he even advocated capital punishment for himself if it could be sustained that he was guilty of a capital crime (Acts 25:10-12). *Civil disobedience must not be taken lightly!* It is a desperate act to be taken only when all other means fail. The Christian is bound to say that the law of God takes precedence over the law of man, *if the two are in clear, unequivocal conflict*. But the Christian must be very certain that there is an irreconcilable conflict before he takes the drastic step of disobeying civil law—whether he lives under a pagan ruler like Nero or one who espouses Christianity. The devil would like nothing better than to create civil anarchy in the name of Christian civil disobedience! Jehovah is a God of order, peace, discipline and obedience. He does not condone anarchy and social disorder (I Cor. 14:33) and especially so in His own kingdom, the church! Of course, God does not condone compromise of His commandments, either. God has instituted the authority of the home, the church and the state. Man's individual feelings do not supersede any of these. They are not to be violated on the authority of man, but can only be superseded by the higher law of God. What about "turning the other cheek" (Mt. 5:38-45)? That is forbidding *individual* retaliation. No man, especially a Christian, has the right to hand out individual vengeance. God has ordained human governments to meet out vengeance on His behalf (cf. Rom. 12:18 through 13:7). Why did Jesus tell the disciples to get swords (Lk. 22:35-38)? Two swords were enough to allow the disciples to *defend* themselves against the imminent mob-violence, but not enough to start a war of vengeance on Jesus' enemies. What about Peter's use of the sword in the garden of Gethsemane (Jn. 18:10-12; Mt. 26:51-54)? Jesus answered three ways: (a) I must drink the cup appointed Me; (b) If this were the time for power against My enemies I could call legions of angels; (c) Those who take the sword shall perish by the sword: Jesus meant to teach Peter not to take the law into his own hands and to predict that the murderous Jews would soon perish by Roman swords. God does a better job of avenging through His use of human governments than the individual could ever do.

A great amount of human speculation has been done on the question of religion and government. Jesus answered the Pharisees and the Herodians skillfully and succinctly. His very concise answer infers He expected His Jewish listeners to know there was a precise Biblical answer. He knew that God had revealed Himself thoroughly on the subject in the Old Testament scriptures. They should know exactly what belonged to Caesar and what belonged to God without any further details from Him! We also believe that the Bible is clear enough and thorough enough that any believer may

know what his responsibility is to both Caesar and God. There can be no equivocation on this great issue of life by the Christian. The Christian can have only one conscience about church and state—that is the one which the Bible delineates! For more discussion on this subject see the special study, “The Christian and War,” *Isaiah, Vol. 2*, by Paul T. Butler, pgs. 72-82, College Press.

In Christ’s brief answer, He laid the foundation for the principle of the separation of Church and State. Neither should replace or control the other. They may and do have mutual obligations. The State should maintain a peaceful and tranquil society in which the Church is free to do its work. The Church should produce the kind of character which will mean good citizenship. One sharp dividing line exists: neither should control the other or meddle in its affairs. When that prevails, society is blessed.

Not only could the Pharisees not trap Him into some *faux pas* and turn the multitudes against Him, they were so astounded and amazed at the truthfulness and skill of His answer they were dumbfounded—they were silenced! They dared not pursue the subject further. What Jesus had said was complete.

#### SECTION 4

### Resurrection and the Grave (20:27-40)

27 There came to him some Sadducees, those who say that there is no resurrection, <sup>28</sup>and they asked him a question, saying, “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man must take the wife and raise up children for his brother. <sup>29</sup>Now there were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and died without children; <sup>30</sup>and the second <sup>31</sup>and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died. <sup>32</sup>Afterward the woman also died. <sup>33</sup>In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife.”

34 And Jesus said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage; <sup>35</sup>but those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, <sup>36</sup>for they cannot die any more, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. <sup>37</sup>But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. <sup>38</sup>Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him.” <sup>39</sup>And some of the scribes answered, “Teacher, you have spoken well.” <sup>40</sup>For they no longer dared to ask him any question.

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**20:27-33 Rationalizations of Humanism:** The next group coming to try to destroy Jesus' image with the people were the Sadducees. They also had a "catch" question which they believed would be unanswerable. They fully expected to destroy Jesus' reputation as a teacher in the eyes of the people. Their question dealt with the most crucial issue of human life: Is there life after death?

The sect of the Sadducees were the humanists of the Jewish religious hierarchy. Most Sadducees were priests and their sect likely originated with Zadok, the famous priest of David's day (cf. II Sam. 15:24; I Kings 1:32; Ezek. 40:46; 43:19; 44:15; 48:11). Their name probably comes from the Hebrew word *tzaddikim* which means literally, "righteous ones." It may have been a sarcastic nickname given to them by others or a boastful one given by themselves. They believed in preserving the nation by intelligence, diplomacy and prudence. They asserted Jews need keep only the "essential" parts of the Mosaic Law (the so-called 613 great principles) and in everything where Moses did not speak they might act according to "the requirements of the time." They were pragmatic toward the attempts of the Seleucid (Syrian) conquerors to Hellenize the Jewish culture during the Maccabean era (300-100 B.C.). Sadducees were wealthy, controlled the Temple and its services, but were in direct opposition in almost every issue with the Pharisees. In Jesus' day, though they secretly hated the Romans, for the good of their nation they believed it was better to make the best of their situation and go along with most anything the Romans demanded. They were the aristocratic party; they did not believe in Divine providence, miracles or angels. They did not believe in a resurrection from the dead (cf. Acts 23:7, 8). They were suspicious of one another and had no group loyalty like the Pharisees had. They renounced all the traditional interpretations and practices of the Pharisees; accepted only the Pentateuch; they insisted on a rigidly literal application of Mosaic Law which led to judicial severity without mercy and made themselves unpopular with the common people.

The Sadducees came to Jesus with a hypothetical question which was probably one of the stock arguments they used against the Pharisees who undoubtedly had a great deal of difficulty providing an answer to it. They proposed the riddle of a woman married to seven husbands who all preceded her in death without ever giving the woman a child. The woman eventually died also, of course. The poser no one was able to answer was, "Whose wife will she be in the resurrection, since she had seven husbands." The Sadducees started, of course, with the *a priori* that the doctrine of immortality was an absurdity and then made up an absurd illustration to prove it. The careful student will note the Sadducees arranged their story so all the woman's husbands were brothers making it conform to the Levirate law (Deut. 25:5, 6). They probably thought this would give the added impact



of inferring the Law of Moses denied immortality because the Law made life after death an impossibility. If a child had been born in the illustration to one of the husbands, it might have solved the question as to whose wife she would be in heaven—craftily they omit children.

**20:34-40 Revelations from Heaven:** Both Matthew and Mark record Jesus' first words in answer to this challenge as: "You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God" (Mt. 22:29; Mk. 12:24). All humanists make the unforgiveable mistake of *a priori* rejection of the scriptural record as unworthy of consideration in the subject of life after death. The Bible claims to be an accurate documentation of historical events. It demands to be tested. If its historicity can be established by all the accepted canons of historical verification, it deserves to be studied and believed. The Sadducees were either innocently ignorant or deliberately ignorant of what the Old Testament said about life after death. They were probably like those people described by Peter who "deliberately ignored the facts" concerning the flood (II Peter 3:5). The Old Testament says this about life after death:

- a. There are actual, documented cases of resurrection from death in the Old Testament (cf. I Kings 17:22; II Kings 4:35; 13:21).
- b. There are documented cases of "translation" from this life to the next life without the experience called death (one in the Pentateuch) (cf. Genesis 5:22-24; II Kings 2:11).
- c. There is one case, well documented by eyewitnesses, of the reappearance of a man (Samuel) after he had died (I Sam. 28:12-19).
- d. There are many declarations in the Old Testament of immortality and eternity: (cf. II Sam. 12:15-23; Psa. 16:8; 23:4-6; Isa. 53:10-12; Eccl. 3:11; 12:5-14; Job 19:25, 26; Ex. 3:6).
- e. The statements in Genesis concerning the patriarchs who died and were buried, and were "gathered to their people" (cf. Gen. 25:8; 35:29) infer immortality. This term is constantly distinguished from death and burial and denotes the reunion in Sheol (place of departed spirits) with family and friends who have gone there before.

Jesus also told the Sadducees they were ignorant of the power of God. This becomes a problem at times even for those who have accepted the historicity and integrity of the Biblical record. The Christians in Corinth to whom Paul wrote two letters had this problem. They said, "Since we have no earthly experience by which to determine what kind of body we will have in the resurrection we have doubts that there will be a resurrection." Paul told them, essentially, just what Jesus said here; God has the power to do in the next life what He has never done in the earthly life. The fundamental ignorance of man is his presumption that the life after death, if there is one, would have to be like this life. That is because man wants to reject anything outside his own experience lest he find out he is

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not his own sovereign. Man does not want to admit there is another Sovereign beyond himself able to do things he himself is not able to do. An all-powerful, all-wise, supernatural God has power to transcend and overcome all the inadequacies and incongruities of this existence by creating another existence, different and everlasting, yet incorporating the best of this one. This was what Jesus tried to convey in His answer to the Sadducees.

Jesus said there would be no marriage or sexual intercourse in heaven. Procreation will not be necessary to the survival of the human race there because those worthy to attain to the resurrection from the dead will be immortal, never dying, like the angels. If we may trust what God has revealed (however little and dim it may be) concerning the next life, we know life and personal intercourse in heaven will be much more thrilling and sensational than any fleshly sexual intercourse could ever be in this life. The apostle Paul was convinced that the next life would be "very far better" than any experience in this life (cf. Phil. 1:21-23). C. S. Lewis wrote some of his opinions about life after death. Here are some excerpts from *The Joyful Christian*, by C. S. Lewis—we think they are appropriate to this text:

**Resurrection of the body:** What the soul cries out for is the resurrection of the senses. Even in this life matter would be nothing to us if it were not the source of sensations. . . . Memory as we know it is a dim foretaste . . . of a power which the soul . . . will exercise hereafter. At the present we tend to think of the soul as somehow inside the body. But the glorified body of the resurrection as I conceive it—the sensuous life raised from its death—will be inside the soul. As God is not in space but space is in God. . . .

**Intercourse in the Afterlife:** Our present outlook of the absence of physical, sexual intercourse in heaven is like that of a small boy who, on being told that the sexual act was the highest bodily pleasure, should immediately ask whether you ate chocolates at the same time. On receiving the answer, "No," he might regard the absence of chocolates as the chief characteristic of sexuality. In vain would you tell him that the reason why lovers in their sexual raptures do not bother about chocolates is that they have something better to think of. The boy knows chocolate. He does not know the "better" thing that excludes it.

We know the sexual life; we do not know, except in glimpses, the "better" thing, which in heaven, leaves no room for the lesser sensation.

In denying that sexual life, as we now understand it, it is not necessary to suppose that the distinction of sexes or personalities will disappear. . . . What is no longer needed (sexual distinction) for biological purposes may be expected to survive for splendor.

**Heaven:** Dance and game *are* frivolous, unimportant down here; for down here is not their natural place. Here, they are a moment's rest from the life we are placed here to live. But in this world everything is upside down. That which, if it could be prolonged here, would be a truancy, is likest that which in a better country is the End of Ends. Joy is the *serious* business of Heaven. . . . At the resurrection of the body . . . once again the birds will sing and the waters flow, and lights and shadows move across the hills, and the faces of our friends laugh upon us with amazed recognition.

For these reasons, and many more sublime than even C. S. Lewis might imagine, Jesus rebuked the Sadducees for not believing in the power of God to make the next life far beyond the limitations of this one. It is significant that in answering the Sadducees Jesus did not refer to Pharisaic traditions, Greek philosophy, nor even to His own authority (as He did in the Sermon on the Mount), but to the Scriptures! He, of course, was God in the flesh and author of the Scriptures. His deity was, at that point, an excusable stumbling to the Jews. He had every right to insist they believe in life after death merely on His "say-so," but giving them the benefit of the doubt about His identity, He appealed to the divine record. They could have no excuse for rejecting the Old Testament—its divine origin was the accepted basis for their existence as a nation and all their hopes for a future messianic relationship to God. Its historicity and integrity had been established by thousands of years of supernatural demonstration to their ancestors. So Jesus cited the Pentateuch itself as the authority for believing in life after death. At the burning bush Moses quoted God as saying that He *is* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex. 3:6). All of these patriarchs had been dead for centuries before Moses, yet God said they were living presently with Him. God is not the God of the annihilated or dead—but of the living.

There are still humanists today denying life after death. The *Humanist Manifesto* of 1933, updated 1973 and called *Humanist Manifesto II*, says, "We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural. . . . Humans are responsible for what we are or will become. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves. Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful. . . . The universe is self-existing and not created. The mind or soul does not exist apart from the body. . . ." Avowed humanist, Corliss Lamont, wrote in the magazine, *The Humanist*, March-April 1980, "Humanists live for actions, ideals on this Earth in our one and only life. Heaven must be built in this world or not at all. . . . While we're here, let's live in clover, for when we're dead, we're dead all over."

This is still the most crucial issue in the life of finite man—life after death. Upon the answer to this issue depends true love, morality, meaning,

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purpose and every human relationship. The only viable answer continues to rest upon the historical integrity and credibility of the Bible for it claims to be the only and final revelation of God concerning this life and the next! One need only compare the after-life concepts of the religions of human origin with that of Christ to appreciate the Biblical revelation. The Buddhist "nirvana" is an alleged state of non-existence; the Hindu after-life involves an endless cycle of re-incarnations into this world of imperfection and tribulation; the Islamic "paradise" is a place of sexual promiscuity and fleshly indulgence. Even orthodox Jews today believe that "some day a Jew will appear who will announce the end of the world as we know it and the establishment of the kingdom of God, in which finally the lion will lay down with the lamb. This Jew, and he will be a person, not an incarnation of God, as if such a thing were possible, is called *Mashiach*, or Messiah. When he arrives there will be a resurrection of the dead, called in Hebrew, *T'chiat Ha-metim*, and all the resurrected of the Jews will gather in Israel, there to live forever. *Mashiach* will be a descendant of the house of David and will be announced by Elijah the Prophet. . . . Nevertheless, if one were to say, 'While not denying what the sages have said, I have no belief concerning any aspect of the life after death or the world to come; all I believe is that my soul is in the hands of God and my faith is in Him' such a Jew would not be considered a heretic, even by the most pious. Much more important than speculation about the afterlife is the acceptance of the revelation of the Torah, which is entirely concerned with life and the living." *Living Jewish*, by Michael Asheri, pub. Everest House, pg. 196. The gospel of Christ is as relevant for the Jews today as it was when Jesus pointed out to the Sadducees that the Torah teaches life after death as a fact and a fundamental tenet of true faith in God. For more information on Old Testament teaching on life after death see special study, "The Future Life," *Isaiah, Vol. II*, by Paul T. Butler, College Press, pgs. 287-299.

The Lord's reply to the Sadducees destroyed the last "stronghold" of His enemies. And even the scribes, personally taking pleasure in His humiliation of the Sadducees, dared not ask Him any more questions. They were at least wise enough to see that from then on every trap laid for him would only give Him another opportunity to manifest His divine wisdom and destroy their pretensions. They give up this method of attack.

### SECTION 5

#### **Rationale of Christ's Glory (20:41-47)**

41 But he said to them, "How can they say that the Christ is David's son? <sup>42</sup>For David himself says in the Book of Psalms,

'The Lord said to my Lord,  
Sit at my right hand,

<sup>43</sup>till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet.' <sup>44</sup>David thus calls him Lord; so how is he his son?"

45 And in the hearing of all the people he said to his disciples, <sup>46</sup>"Beware of the scribes, who like to go about in long robes, and love salutations in the market places and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, <sup>47</sup>who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

**20:41-44 Lord:** Immediately after hearing Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, a lawyer (also a Pharisee) came to Jesus with a sincere desire to know the greatest commandment in the law. Matthew and Mark record Jesus' answer (Mt. 22:34-40; Mk. 12:28-34), but Luke omits it and goes on to record the question Jesus put to the Pharisees concerning the identity of the Messiah.

This quotation and question of Jesus from Psalm 110 is probably His clearest claim to deity recorded by the synoptic gospels. John's gospel, of course, records quite a number of Jesus' clear claims to deity, but the Synoptists are more interested in documenting His claims to be the Messiah.

Jesus knew that He would soon be arrested and charged with blasphemy because at the beginning of His second year of public ministry the Jews became aware He was making Himself equal with God (cf. Jn. 5:18). Now, with the end of His life on earth very near, it was imperative that He prove to the Jews from their own Scriptures that if He was the Messiah—and the multitudes here at the Passover-time were unquestionably shouting that He was—He was also Lord God. His claims to be Messiah, however opaque or transparent at different times, was not what enraged the Jewish rulers. They did not, of course, concede to His messiahship since He did not fit their materialistic preconceptions about the Christ. But they never threatened Him about that—for to have done so would have agitated the multitudes against them. What the Pharisees and scribes continually threatened Him for was His claims to deity. Jewish theologians, for the most part, were never able to understand that the Messiah was to be God Incarnate, and they still do not believe it (see comments on previous text). All Jews are able to answer the first question (as Matthew 22:41, 42) Jesus asked, "What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?" They would all answer, "The son of David!" But they cannot, or will not, answer the second question Jesus asked, "How is it then that David, inspired by the Spirit (Mt. 22:43), calls him Lord. . . ." or as Luke recorded it, "For David himself says, in the book of Psalms, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet. David thus calls him Lord; so now is he his son?" In other words, How can the Messiah be both the son of David and Lord of David?

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The thrust of Jesus' second question was to demonstrate (from David's writings) that the Messiah was to be more than David's son—indeed the Messiah was to be David's Lord God. The statement of David in Psalm 110:1 can be understood in no other way. There David represents Jehovah speaking to David's Lord (Heb. *Adonai*), who is also David's Son, enthroning Him at Jehovah's right hand (co-equal). Jesus is pleading with the Pharisees and scribes to open their hearts to their own Scriptures and believe what God had centuries before promised. Any one of them could have grasped the revelation of God about the Incarnation from their own prophets, had they really wanted to, for some prophecies, at least, were plain enough, (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6, 7; Micah 5:2; Malachi 3:1-3).

This was the most pertinent question, then, or ever. It went to the very heart of the animosity those Jewish rulers had for Jesus. Had they acknowledged the Messiah to be God they would not have been bothered by politics, immortality or keeping God's commandments. It is still the most pertinent question. Men must make up their minds today as to the identity of Jesus of Nazareth. Essentially, the question Jesus asked here is the same question He knew He had to have settled in the minds of the apostles when He asked at Caesarea Philippi, "Who do you say that I am" (cf. Lk. 9:20). The book of Hebrews in the New Testament, written by the apostle Paul, a former Pharisee, gives a thrilling exposition of Psalm 110 (cf. Heb. 5:6; 7:17; 7:20-22) teaching from it both the humanity and deity of Jesus and His eternal priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek. One would expect Jewish priests and scribes to have seen this from their own scriptures, but it was not their desire to do so (see special study, this volume, *The Messianic Hope*, pages 461-466, and notes from *Isaiah, Vol. III*, by Paul T. Butler, College Press, pgs. 277-280 and pgs. 415-418).

It is significant that in Jesus' question about the identity of the Messiah, He added an answer to each of the previous questions asked of Him. To the Sadducees, who did not accept any of the Old Testament except the Pentateuch, Jesus said (as Matthew records, Mt. 22:43) that David wrote Psalm 110 by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. To the Pharisees who rejected the concept that the Messiah could be God Incarnate Jesus said Psalm 110 predicts the Messiah will be David's Lord (God in the flesh). For the multitudes it is not only a revelation of His deity, but also a warning to those who are plotting to crucify Him of the terribleness of the deed.

**20:45-47 Legislator:** Luke now summarizes Jesus' great denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees which Matthew records in much detail (cf. Mt. 23:1-39). The details concerning Jewish scribes and Pharisees would not be of much interest to Luke's Gentile readers, and since Matthew had treated the subject thoroughly and Luke himself had documented an earlier denunciation of the scribes by Jesus (Lk. 11:37-54), he simply summarizes here.

Jesus' condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees means He claims the right to judge men's motives and actions. His rationale for deity comes from scripture (Psa. 110:1ff.) and from His very evident power to actually discern the thoughts and intents of men's hearts as He does here.

"Beware," He commands, to the crowds, His disciples, and even to the Pharisees themselves, "of the scribes. . . ." Before the nation could be won to Jesus' spiritual kingdom, the false teachers and their worldliness and hypocrisy had to be exposed for what it was. He challenged His disciples and the multitudes to disown the whole false system the Pharisees had imposed on the nation. These religious leaders loved the wrong thing. The motive for everything they did was self-centered. Pride and power were the motives for their actions. They loved to go about in long robes, to be saluted in the market places as "Rabbi, Master," and the chief seats of honor in the synagogues and at feasts. Pride and lust for power always produces unmercifulness and greed. They "devoured" widows' houses, all the while making a pretense to be very religious by reciting long prayers. Josephus records that the Pharisees had especial influence over wealthy women accepting hospitality and rich presents from them, devouring their riches for their own political purposes. The wife of Pheroras, brother of Herod the Great, paid the fines of thousands of Pharisees who had been fined for refusing to swear loyalty to Caesar. The Talmud gives evidence of the plundering of widows. The Pharisees and scribes claimed a very exact knowledge of the law and a perfect observance of it. They pretended to stand for justice toward the poor, friendship for the distressed and were willing to aid those who were in financial straits. They could therefore induce widows and poor people to commit the management of their property to them as guardians and executors, and then took advantage of them and defrauded them. The Talmud records the warning given by Alexander Jannaeus (Maccabean ruler) to his wife on his death-bed against trusting any advice of the Pharisees.

These are the last recorded words Jesus ever spoke to the Pharisees and scribes (except at His trial), and they were words of judgment and condemnation. And even these words are spoken with a broken heart, hoping at the last moment to drive them to repentance. He can do no more. If they now refuse both their own scriptures and His demonstrations of deity, judgment must come and they will receive the greater condemnation for they have been granted the greater privilege and have spurned it! Truly, they "filled up the measure of their fathers" (Mt. 23:32) and Jesus was forced by their obstinacy to "forsake" them and leave them with their "house desolate" (Mt. 23:37-39).

So ended the public prosecution of Jesus. The Pharisees and Sadducees never attempted to publicly discredit Jesus again. He answered all their questions with divine wisdom and, what they thought would ruin His

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reputation, began to work toward their own ruin. It was a tragi-comedy of trifles. The Pharisees and Sadducees and Herodians pretended to raise the fundamental issues of life. Jesus revealed that the fundamental issue of human life is to identify and surrender to the God who became Incarnate in the Son of David. Everything else in man's life is peripheral. To put anything before this is trafficking in trifles.

### STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Would referral to John's baptism still be a good answer to anyone (especially religious leaders) today who would challenge Jesus' identity and authority?
2. Is the parable of wicked husbandmen who refused to give the Owner his due only applicable to the Jewish nation—or could it be applied to anyone now? Who?
3. If Jesus expected the Jews of His day to have read and understood the Old Testament prophecies referring to the Messiah and to have seen their fulfillment in Him, what does He expect of Jews today? What about Gentiles?
4. Why is the "key-stone" of man's relationship to God a Person, Jesus, instead of a religious system, or "plan of salvation"?
5. How did Jesus react to the flattery of the Pharisees and Herodians? What should the Christian do about flattery?
6. How should a Christian look upon paying taxes to his government?
7. Would it be wrong for a Christian to serve in the armed forces of his country? Just what should be "rendered to Caesar" by the believer?
8. Where should the Christian stand on "civil disobedience"?
9. What is the basis upon which most unbelievers reject the idea of life after death?
10. What is the only viable evidence that there is life after death? Why?
11. If there is no marriage in heaven, how can there be any enjoyment?
12. Why should the Jews of Jesus' day have understood that the Messiah was to be God in the flesh? Why didn't they? Is that a problem for people today? How is it to be answered?



## Special Study

### THE MESSIANIC HOPE

by Paul T. Butler

The Old Testament made many glorious promises in connection with the Messianic hope. Isaiah, chapters 40-66; Daniel 9:24-27; Micah 4-7; Zechariah 9-14.

When the Jews returned from their captivities (cir. 536-444 B.C.) it was with this hope in their hearts. They believed Jehovah would rule the land directly through a son of David, he would enforce the Law and promote the ritual religion. Some looked for Zerubbabel to fulfill this.

Time after time their fulfillment of this hope was frustrated by some foreign (Ptolemies and Seleucids and Romans) or some home-grown (Hasmonean and Herodian) oppression.

As the physical, earthly accomplishment of this hope became less evident (i.e., accomplishment through natural events), the anticipation increased that Jehovah would intervene in a great crisis of the cosmos (see Jn. 12:31 where Jesus uses that very phrase in Greek in connection with His death on the cross) and effect a deliverance of all the righteous Jews (*not* Hellenistic Jews) and God would suddenly, secretly almost, institute the messianic age.

This hope had never been so much alive, so vivid, nor its fulfillment so urgently awaited, as it was in the first centuries B.C. and A.D.—a time of sadness and deep, tormenting, national humiliation.

There was a body of literature that arose between the Old Testament and New Testament that expressed the Jewish ideas of the expected messianic age called the Jewish Apocrypha (apocalyptic in nature). The Sybilline Oracles, Book III (150 B.C.); the Book of Enoch (164 B.C.); The Psalms of Solomon (48 B.C.) are the most graphic. The Mishna, Talmud and Targums (rabbinic writings written after Christ but expressing traditions in oral form before Christ) are also valuable for determining the messianic ideas of first century people. They testify generally that the Messiah will:

- a. Attain for the people a literalized fulfillment of the promises of the Old Testament prophets (physical prosperity; physical conquest of enemies; physical restoration of Judaism).
- b. Defeat Jewish enemies and force them to serve the Jews.
- c. Restore all Jews to their "land" forever.
- d. Institute an era of Mosaic purity (as interpreted, of course, by the rabbis).

Josephus speaks of a number of men before and after Jesus who pretended to be the Messiah, obtained followers, fought Jewish enemies, and usually ended up slain in battle or executed. Josephus says "there was an ambiguous prophecy (probably referring to Dan. 9:24-27) in the Holy

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Scriptures which told the Jews that in those times a man of their nation would become the master of the world" Wars, 6:312.

Some believed in Jesus' day in a personal Messiah. This belief took *four* forms:

1. An Angel: As earthly powers continued to oppress the Jews with more intensity it was inevitable that the concept of the Messiah should become more and more transcendent. Many despaired of human deliverance and turned to hope in an angelic being coming from heaven with cosmic, supernatural power. See the Similitudes of Enoch (I Enoch, 164 B.C.) where the Son of Man is presented as a heavenly being with no prior human existence . . . his face has the appearance of a man and yet it is "full of graciousness like one of the holy angels." (46:1ff.).

Remember the devil's attempt to get Jesus to show off some supernatural, angelic power . . . "if he was the Son of God. . . ." Matt. 4:5, 6.

2. A Prophet: Some interpreted Malachi 3:1ff. and 4:5 as referring to the Messiah himself rather than the forerunner—thus he would be a prophet like Elijah. Many of the disciples of John the Baptist refused to abandon their belief in him as the true Messiah and perpetuated into the 2nd century A.D. a sect which held up John the Baptist messiahship in opposition to Jesus (The Mandaens; see Ency. Britt. Vol. 4 and 10).

The Samaritans were expecting a prophetic messiah, Jn. 4:19-26. Many of the Jews thought this also, Jn. 7:40; Mt. 16:14; Jn. 1:21; I Macc. 4:46; etc. Jn. 6:14.

3. A Priest: In later interbiblical history there appears the idea of a messianic priest. When the offices of High Priest and prince of Israel were combined in Simon the Maccabean, impetus was given to the development of such hope. But as the High Priesthood became more and more secularized and corrupted, this view seems to have found less and less acceptance. See the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (110 B.C.).

4. A King: By far the most popular view was a Messiah-warrior-king. He would appear as a political champion. Jews from all over the world would rally to his side, sweep the pagans from Palestine, subdue the world, plunder its riches, kill all idolaters and make proselytes and servants of the rest.

See this view in all the earliest Jewish apocryphal writings, and, Mt. 21:9, 15 (cf. Zech. 9:9, 10); Mt. 22:42; Mk. 13:35;

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Lk. 20:41; Jn. 6:15; I Macc. 2:57; Psalms of Solomon 17:5, 23, etc.

Even this popular view expected the Messiah's origin to be shrouded in mystery (Jn. 7:21ff.) and His mission to be one of cosmic supernaturalisms, Mt. 12:38; Jn. 7:31.

Remember the temptation of the devil to make Jesus an earthly king.

There were many who arose pretending to be the Messiah. *Theudas* had 400 followers but he was slain (Acts 5:36; Josephus, *Antiq.* 20:97ff.). *Judas the Galilean* was also slain (Acts 5:37; Josephus, *Antiq.* 18:23). *An Egyptian* gained about 30,000 followers, (Josephus, *Wars* 2:261ff. and Acts 21:37, 38). Menachem bar-Judah and Simeon bar-Giora (*Wars*, 2:17:8; *Wars*, 4:9:7 respectively), and many others after Jesus were hoped-for messiahs.

There was great expectancy in the first century A.D., but there was also great confusion and misunderstanding concerning the Messiah and His kingdom. Jesus' most frustrating ministry was to try to *convert*, literally change, the confusion, materialism and patriotic provincialism of the messianic people into what it was really intended to be by God as predicted in the Old Testament prophets.

WHAT DID THE PEOPLE OF JESUS' DAY THINK OF THE MESSIAH? (Our *best* sources are the Gospel records themselves.)

1. Mt. 2:4-6: He would be born in Bethlehem—the scholars knew this much.
2. Lk. 2:25, 38: Some were "looking for" the "consolation" and "redemption" of Israel and Jerusalem.
3. Lk. 3:15-18: Many thought John the Baptist might be the Messiah.
4. Mt. 4:1-11; Mk. 1:12-13; Lk. 4:1-13: Jesus' temptations indicate the popular messianic concept.
5. Jn. 1:19-28: Jewish leaders knew a connection between Elijah and Messiah and thought John the Baptist might be one or the other.
6. Jn. 1:45-51: Nathanael did not believe the Messiah would come from Nazareth.
7. Jn. 4:5-26: Samaritans believed when Messiah came he would settle religious disputes.
8. Lk. 4:16-31: Jews of Galilee did not accept Messianic prophecies of Isaiah 61 being made available to Gentiles.
9. Mt. 9:1-8; Mk. 2:1-12; Lk. 5:17-26: Apparently the Jews did not think their Messiah would be God incarnate and able to forgive men's sins.

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10. Mt. 9:10-14; Mk. 2:15-22; Lk. 5:29-39: Apparently Jewish rabbis did not think their Messiah would associate with publicans and sinners.
11. Mt. 11:2-19; Lk. 7:18-35: Messiah is called "The Expected One" (as in Similitudes of Enoch) by John the Baptist who apparently expected Him to be more militant than Jesus was.
12. Mt. 12:38: Jewish rulers insisted Jesus must show a "sign" to prove his messiahship.
13. Mt. 13:54-58; Mk. 6:1-6: People could not imagine Jesus as the Messiah because they knew his origins.
14. Jn. 6:14, 15: Messiah would be "The Prophet" and he must be crowned King.
15. Jn. 6:22-59: Jesus perceived the people wanted a bread-and-fish Messiah—one who would do a "work" to prove he was the Messiah.
16. Jn. 6:66-71: Jesus' disciples thought of the Messiah as "The Holy One of God."
17. Mt. 16:13-16; Mk. 8:27-29; Lk. 9:17-20: Disciples show that the people thought the Messiah would be Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets, perhaps. Peter would not believe the Messiah was to die Mt. 16:21-23; Mk. 8:31-33.
18. Mt. 17:10-13; Mk. 9:11-13: Elijah's coming must precede that of the Son of Man—a literal Elijah, perhaps.
19. Mt. 18:1-5; Mk. 9:33-37; Lk. 9:46-48: Disciples thought of messianic kingdom in terms of power struggles.
20. Jn. 7:2-9: Jesus' brothers expected him to prove his messiahship in Jerusalem in some public, spectacular, carnal demonstration of power.
21. Lk. 9:51-56: Disciples expect Messiah to punish those who reject him by fire from heaven.
22. Jn. 7:27: No one is supposed to know where the Messiah comes from—he is to appear suddenly—but he would perform enough signs for everyone to know him—not just the rulers.
23. Jn. 7:35: Messiah was not expected to go among the Jewish dispersion.
24. Jn. 7:40-43: Confusion about Messiah. Some thought he would be The Prophet from Galilee, others believed from Bethlehem.
25. Jn. 8:52, 53: Jewish scholars did not expect the Messiah to be an "eternal" personage.
26. Lk. 11:16: Messiah must show a sign from "heaven."

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27. Lk. 12:54-59: Jews could not read the "signs" that their Messiah was to come in judgment upon their nation.
28. Jn. 9:13-34: Messiah must keep Sabbath according to their traditions.
29. Lk. 14:15: Jews were looking for a time of "eating" of banquets in the messianic kingdom as repayment for their troubles (cf. Isa. 25:6ff.).
30. Mt. 20:20-28; Mk. 10:35-45: Mother of the sons of Zebedee understood the messianic kingdom to be one of position and power.
31. Jn. 12:20-36: Some believed the Messiah was to remain forever and not die.
32. Mt. 22:41-46; Mk. 12:35-37; Lk. 20:41-44: Apparently the Jews did not conceive of the Son of David as also *David's Lord!*
33. Mt. 23:37— Mk. 24:1-4; Mk. 13:1-4; Lk. 21:5-7: Apparently the people did not think of the coming of the Messiah as a judgment upon Jerusalem and the nation. They did think of his coming as the end of the world and Jesus had to correct this view.
34. Mt. 26:51, 52; Jn. 18:10, 11: Peter thought of messianic kingdom as needing to be defended with swords.
35. Mt. 26:57-68; Mk. 14:53-65: Apparently the High Priest did not conceive of the Messiah or anyone else calling himself "God."
36. Jn. 18:28-38: Pilate understood Jesus to be an idealist—not an earthly king.
37. Lk. 23:51: Joseph of Arimathea "was looking for" the kingdom of God.
38. Lk. 24:13-32: Disciples despondent when Jesus did not "redeem" Israel according to their own hopes. Jesus, however, *expected* them to have a *spiritual* view of the Old Testament messianic promises and *rebuked* them for not having it.
39. Acts 1:6: Even after the resurrection the disciples had a somewhat earthly view of the kingdom of God.
40. Acts 6:8-15: The Jews would not accept any claimant to the messianic throne who would "change the customs which Moses delivered."

The humanistic, materialistic traditions of the Pharisees and Sadducees and others (Essenes, et al), kept the common people confused about the Messiah and his kingdom. Jesus actually did not convert a single person fully to His teaching of the Messiah and the kingdom. It was only after His death and resurrection and the Day of Pentecost that some of the Jews began to see it correctly (including His disciples). And even then, it took

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some years before most of the Jews accepted the idea that the messianic kingdom was to be available to the Gentiles on the same basis as to Jews. But the four gospel accounts testify to this:

JESUS OF NAZARETH, SON OF MARY ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, IS INDEED THE ANOINTED (MESSIAH) OF JEHOVAH—THE PROPHET, PRIEST AND KING PREDICTED BY THE OLD TESTAMENT. AND HE IS THE MESSIAH OF ALL THE NATIONS!

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For a résumé of modern Jewish messianic theology, see *Isaiah, Vol. III*, by Paul T. Butler, pub. College Press, Joplin, Mo., pgs. 277-280 and 415-418.