

Luke 20

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Title: Your arms are too short to box with God!

My regulars know I use that lesson title regularly! I use that expression because here in Luke 20, Jesus gets asked a handful of questions hoping He'd say, "I'm God" so those asking the questions got grounds to arrest Him for blasphemy. I realize I'm lecturing those who believe Jesus is God. Most of us would not put God to a test! Still I'm guessing all of us have dealt with people who refuse to accept that Jesus is God or refuse to change their lifestyles based on what we know is true. It's a good idea for Christians to consider Jesus' answers to the questions posed in this chapter. I'm not saying asking questions tied to the ones Jesus asked will get people to convert. Only the Holy Spirit can change hearts. Getting people to think about how Jesus handles tough situations is helpful for us when we face difficult situations.

I'm guessing most of us have dealt with people really hurting for one reason or another. They will state that God has never done anything for them, so why should they budge? Personally, I can't understand a person not wanting to take the risk of denying Jesus is God for the hopes of eternal life despite the stuff life throws at us. Still people want a "genie in a bottle" God as opposed to submitting our lives to Him!

It might be best at this point to discuss some of the "Q&A" of this chapter. To set the scene, we're now a few days before the crucifixion. Notice Jesus is spending this day dealing with nonbelievers asking a bunch of questions with people listening to His answers. This is here to help us think about how we are to answer questions when dealing with nonbelievers.

The chapter opens (for newcomers, there are no chapter breaks in original text), with Jesus teaching the Gospel message at the Jewish Temple, for anyone willing to listen. The religious leaders hated him for that because Jesus preached salvation strictly based on faith and not works! The Jewish leaders wanted to make Jesus disappear (be thrown in jail or killed) as His teaching is killing their "business model" to make a profit! While Jesus taught anyone willing to listen, He was interrupted by those leaders hoping to "trap Him". I don't know about you, but to me testing Jesus isn't good for one's eternal salvation. He answers their questions and makes them think twice about questioning Him. Let me explain further:

The first question the religious leaders asked Jesus is who gave Him the authority to preach what He is preaching? What the religious leaders wanted was for Jesus to say "God sent me" so they could accuse Him of blasphemy claiming to be God's son! Jesus answered that question with His own: When He got baptized by John was that God ordained? They didn't say "we asked you first" knowing they still need to answer Jesus' questions to arrest Him (due to crowd support). The religious leaders didn't answer at that moment as many Israelites believed John the Baptist was a prophet! Their response was we do not know (about John being a prophet)! Jesus then said if you can't answer that question, then neither will I give an answer to who sent Me! Jesus could say it was God who sent me, but He knew those religious leaders were only looking for reasons to say Jesus isn't God, so He answered accordingly.

A big mistake a lot of Christians make is we try to "hit a home run when a single will do". It means we should give people something to think about, as opposed to trying to convert them on the spot. To give an example, I'll ask an atheist how a very complex DNA molecule could come from a primeval soup of how they see earth before life! I also like asking, where does the energy come from to create the world we live in? I know they can't answer, but it gives them food for thought! Another question for atheists

is what do say to a child dying of cancer, "Better luck next time?" We don't have to quote Jesus to deal with non-believers, but we can give them something to think about! The important thing is to pray for God to open people's hearts and if possible, give them "food for thought". It's what Jesus does here!

The second story in Chapter 20 is a parable (made up story). Jesus said there was a man who owned a piece of land in Israel and wanted to grow grapes there. He leased it out to farmers and when the next harvest-time came, he sent a servant to get "his share of the profit". Note that this type of arrangement was common in Israel. For the fun of it I like pointing out grapes are harvested in July and all this took place in March/April (a few days before the Passover holiday). I'm stating this to point out Jesus didn't drink fresh grape juice at the Last Supper scene. Meanwhile in the parable the landowner sent a servant to get his payment. That servant was beaten up. Then the owner sent another servant and a third, same thing. Then the owner sent his only son thinking the farmers would respect him. The farmers probably figured the owner's dead, so if we kill his son legally the land would be there's by default. I figure that the audience Jesus was speaking to knew this was a crime. They got that the traveling father here does represent God the Father. The farmers killing the son represented the Israelite population and yes Jesus is the son who got killed. When Jesus said the landowner would kill those farmers, that crowd replied, "May it never be". The crowd knew the point of the parable is God kicking Israel out of the land!

Jesus then gave the "punch line" which is from Psalm 118 that reads, "the stone the builders rejected is now the chief cornerstone!" He was obviously speaking to the religious leaders who rejected Jesus as a living representative of God in their presence. The message to non-believers is just because you do not accept Jesus as God, does NOT change the fact it is true! The message to non-believers is just because you don't believe Jesus isn't God does change the facts! One of the arguments I like to make to atheists is if I'm wrong, I've lived a good life and then I die with no memory. If they are wrong, it is hell for all eternity so just saying it's worth betting on "the right horse"!

Since that tactic didn't work, time for the next one. This is the famous story of Jesus given a coin used by the Romans for money. The religious leaders were hoping Jesus would say something to be Roman supportive. If He said no, the Romans would arrest Him. Jesus gave the famous answer given the fact Caesar's image was on the coin and said, "Render unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar", thus still being pro-Israel without nullifying Roman rule. I should comment for a second about rebellion against those in charge: Romans 13 discusses respecting government authorities. Is there things the government does I don't approve of? Of course! Does that mean for example the Americans shouldn't have fought in the American Revolution war? Debatable! Therefore, complaining about government leaders shouldn't be an issue when it comes to living as God calls us to live!

Meanwhile back to Jesus being questioned by the religious leaders. They tell Jesus a made-up story by asking Jesus about a woman who was married seven times after being a widow six times! It's important to point out the specific group asking that question didn't believe in an afterlife. (That group was called the Sadducees.) Jesus points out that marriage is irrelevant in heaven as there is only saved people and a marriage doesn't continue in the next life. That throws a wrench in the Mormon belief that a marriage is going to continue for eternity! I should also point out that the Sadducees believed the first five books of the Bible given to Moses were God inspired but not the rest. Jesus then quotes from Genesis saying God is (versus "was") the God of Abraham, his son Issac and his son Jacob proving there is a next life! My point is Jesus quoted from part of the Bible the Sadducees considered God inspired!

Jesus ends this "Q&A" session with His own question. In Psalm 110, penned by David, he refers to his son (descendant) as His Lord (referring to Jesus)! In Jewish thinking one would never call one's son to

be His Lord (superior). His point is even David realized one of his descendants would be Lord of all, a reference to Jesus in the future! No response was given!

Obviously, if we encounter a non-believer the exact questions may not work. As I pointed out earlier, it is good to give people something to think about as opposing for going for a "home run" on the spot. To understand how Jesus answers and asks questions gives us food for thought to deal with a person who's questioning themselves. In such situations I fire up a quick prayer and simply ask God for wisdom for what He desires we do in that situation!

With that said, hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on the link for the detailed study. It's still a joy to study this stuff and again I'm grateful for everyone who reads this.