



“Biblical Authority”
Luke 20:27-21:4

Idea: No person will ever know Jesus well until he or she knows the Bible well and submits to its authority.

Intro: Who is in control? Recognizing and submitting to authority is essential for success in every aspect of society. It is one of the good graces of God, and without authority, there is only confusion and chaos. When, however, there is a recognition of and a submission to authority, then there is the potential for clarity and order and all the goodness that emanates from them. Most people want authority, but because of sin, few people want to be under it. Last Sunday, we were confronted with the reality that Jesus possesses all authority in heaven and on earth. As the King of Kings, He is enthroned over creation. His authority is unquestionable, irrefutable, and incontestable.

The Pharisees who confronted and attempted to trap Jesus with questions about John’s baptism and paying taxes to Caesar were silenced by His answers (20:1-26), but they refused to submit to the authority He claimed. From their perspective, the claims Jesus made about Himself were scandalous. He dared to proclaim Himself to be Israel’s long-awaited Messiah, but He was just that according to the prophets. These religious leaders should have been the first ones to recognize this reality because He was the fulfillment of the very Scriptures, they had given their lives to study and teach. Sadly, while they had committed their lives to study God’s Word, they had not committed to submit themselves to it. Truthfully, what was a danger for the Jewish people in Jesus’ day is still a danger for us today. It is possible to read and study the Bible regularly but miss its message. You see, the metanarrative of Scripture is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As we articulate in our doctrinal confession, the Bible “has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter.” The very goal of the Bible is to introduce its readers to Jesus Christ and lead them to know Him as Lord and Savior.

As we walk through our passage today, I want you to understand that you will never know Jesus well until you know your Bible well and submit to its authority. Consequently, I want to talk to you about biblical authority. Let’s look at what Luke has to say about it.

Read Luke 20:27-21:4.

Inquiry: Back in 20:1, the conservative religious leaders had approached Jesus with questions about His authority. They questioned Him on the grounds of religious and civil authority. Jesus silenced them with His responses. Now, in 20:27, the liberal religious leaders give it a try. They challenged Jesus on the ground of Scriptural authority, which is interesting because they dismissed most of it.

These liberal leaders made up the party of the Sadducees. They were the opposition party to the Pharisees within the Sanhedrin, a leadership council made up of seventy men. The two groups argued all the time over doctrinal issues. However, they were united in their quest to rid Israel of Jesus.

The Sadducees had become a class unto themselves based on their hereditary advantage. They were the descendants of Zadok, and they had been granted the privilege of serving as priests after the return from exile. As such, the Sadducees formed the nucleus for the priesthood, staffing the Jerusalem Temple. During Jesus' life and ministry, they also had a lock on the high-priestly line. The Jewish historian, Josephus, described them as "well-to-do" and "men of the highest esteem." They were worldly men who owned the commerce that took place within the Temple. Speaking of the high priest Ananias, Josephus explained that he had advanced in reputation simply because "he was able to supply them with money." As such, the Sadducees were philosophical and theological materialists. They rejected the idea of life after death, eternal judgment, and miracles. They only accepted as Scripture the five books of Moses (The Torah). Having stepped away from the Scriptures, they became nothing more than mean-spirited and heartless religious aristocrats. So, their questioning of Jesus had nothing to do with better understanding the resurrection. Instead, it was an attempt to make both the Scriptures and Jesus look ridiculous.

In response to the Sadducees' riddle, Jesus pointed them and those who listened to the Word of God. The Sadducees' dismissal of Scripture was the reason for their materialism and inability to recognize Him as Lord and Savior. We learn from this interaction that the Bible authoritatively speaks into every facet of our lives. The big question is how well are we hearing and heeding it?

Luke lays out three areas of neglect found in the Sadducees.

Three Neglected Teachings

1. Resurrection Life (20:27-40)

The scenario laid out by the Sadducees was in reference to the law of the kinsman-redeemer (Deut 25:5-10). This law was given to keep a family from dying out and to keep the family wealth intact. It was actually a custom in place long before Moses put it into the Law (Gen 38). By doing so, God solidified this practice as that which is right and good. The Sadducees did understand some aspects of the law of the kinsman-redeemer, but they clearly had no comprehension of the differences between "*this age*" and "*that age*" (20:34-35). According to Jesus, there are substantial differences between what happens on earth and what takes place in heaven. One tremendous distinction is that in heaven there is no marriage.

Jesus' words were counterintuitive to the Sadducees and many of the other Jews. The common Jewish belief about the afterlife was that for those who were good, it was an extension and multiplication of the goodness of earthly life. This presumed continuity between this life and the next was not only wrong, but if unchecked could lead to tragic error. Today, there are entire religions built around this error such as Mormonism and Islam. For example, Mormons believe marriages sealed in the Mormon Temple are eternal. According to their theology, marriage is essential to one's development in becoming a god. Celestial marriages in this life carry over into the next as one ascends to divinity with offspring filling other worlds.

The Bible teaches that marriage is an earthly reality but not a heavenly one. This news might be welcomed by some people. Sadly, the thought of being married to their spouse for all eternity makes them cringe. To those, however, whose marriages are strong and full of love, this news is not so welcomed.

The reason there is no marriage in heaven has nothing to do with how people approach the covenant of marriage. The reason there is no marriage is because heaven is different than earth. Jesus mentioned two differences. First, there is no death in heaven. One of the primary reasons for marriage is the need

to procreate. The command to Adam and Eve was to multiply and fill the earth (Gen 1:28). The original command was given so that the earth would be filled. After sin brought death into the picture, marriage was that much more necessary to keep filling the earth as death fought against the command. Since there is no death in heaven, marriage will be surpassed. Again, we must not mistake resurrection life for a reconstruction of the old life. Instead, it is the miraculous granting of a new body that has continuity with the old body but not identity (1 Cor 15:35-50). Eternal life with God will not be a continuation of one's mortal life on a higher plane. People, however, will maintain their personhood and know each other. You will know your spouse in eternity, but it will be different than you know him or her today. It will be grander and greater. You will love in ways you could never in this life.

The second difference mentioned by Jesus is the exalted transformation that takes place. He says believers will be, *“equal to angels...sons of God...sons of the resurrection.”* We will be like the angels in beauty and strength. Our bodies will be capable of things we cannot even imagine today. Our mental and spiritual capacities will be exponentially greater (1 Cor 15:43). Like the angels we will perfectly do God's will, without the hint of selfish desires or prideful thoughts. Also like the angels, we will perpetually worship God, and joy will be our emotion.

This resurrection was personified in the Old Testament, and because Jesus knew His Bible, He understood this truth. He offered to the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, an exegetical defense of it from Moses. No Jew would have denied that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived with God even though they had died. Jesus' point was that God is the God of the living; therefore, the resurrection of believers is a biblical reality, and the Sadducees recognized it.

2. Redemption in Christ (20:41-44)

After shutting the religious leaders up, Jesus moves to shut them down by asking them a question. It was a commonly held belief that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David. They believed he would be an especially gifted human leader who would usher in a new geo-political kingdom like David of old. The problem was that the leaders had not read through the Old Testament prophecies with spiritual eyes of belief. If that had, then they would have seen that they demanded a superhuman figure.

Using Psalm 110 as the backdrop, Jesus asked how the Christ could be David's son. This Messianic psalm is quoted more than any other in the New Testament as the writers argue for Jesus as the Christ. It describes the Messiah as an eternal Priest-King. We see in the Bible that Jesus fulfills it by birth as a son of David. Likewise, we see that He reigns as Lord through His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension.

The Sadducees and other religious leaders should have seen this truth as they studied the Scriptures. The blind beggar and other recognized it (18:38). The Sadducees failed to see it because they read the Word through their own lenses, which blinded them to the Truth. Rather than recognizing Scripture's authority, they rested in their own, interpreting Scripture and Jesus by it.

Today, we too have our own lenses, which blind us to the authority of God's Word. Therefore, we must strive to read the Bible for what it is. The Word always points us to Jesus that we might know Him as Lord and Savior.

3. Real Worship (20:45-21:4)

The religious leaders refused to see Jesus in the Scriptures, but they paraded around before the people as if they were great worshipers and seekers of God. Jesus, however, pointed out their hypocrisy. They enjoyed the recognition, honor, and privilege that came with the role of scribe, but they missed the very purpose of their position. Their responsibility, as a teacher, was to lead the people to see God's glory

and worship Him. They were supposed to spend themselves on behalf of others, so that others would worship the Lord. Instead, all they sought to do was to receive and enjoy their own glory.

Luke seems to juxtapose the scribes against the poor widow who gave her all as she put two copper coins into the offering box. The scribes were part of the wealthy class in Israel. Their gifts that day would have been much more than the insignificant gift of the poor widow, yet Jesus says that her gift was far greater than the others because *“out of her poverty”* she gave her all (21:4).

The widow’s gift in no way represents the least of what we should offer to God. Rather it characterizes how we ought to offer the Lord all that we have. When it comes to our giving, God sees more than the portion; He sees the proportion. The scribes and religious leaders loved the privilege and prominence their roles afforded them, but sadly, it did not spiritually impact their lives. They had not given themselves over to God.

What we offer up to the Lord in our all-of-life worship ought to be our best because it ought to be all that we are. This story of the poor widow is about so much more than a monetary gift. It calls us to a life of real worship and surrender to Christ.

Conclusion: The Sadducees failed to recognize Jesus for who He was. They had every advantage, but they missed it because they refused to submit themselves under the authority of Scripture. Their perspective of the resurrection, redemption, and worship were all skewed as a result. Their long-awaited Messiah stood in their midst, and they could not recognize Him. This reality makes it clear that no person will ever know Jesus well until he or she knows the Bible well and submits to its authority. Do you know it well? Have and do you submit under it? Each and every week, we gather for “worship,” but I wonder how many of us encounter the Lord. As we think about the neglected teachings, there are three applications for us as we seek to know Jesus more fully.

Three Applications

1) Approach the Bible in faith.

Come to it with the belief that it is true, so that you act in faith toward what it says.

2) Submit to the Bible in obedience.

Come to it with a desire to follow what it says, so that your answer is always yes.

3) Apply the Bible in worship.

Come to it with a commitment to yield completely to the Lord, so that your life is a sweet offering of worship.