

“Seeing through the Given” Luke 20:20-21:4

Context: Luke records a series of tense exchanges between Jesus and the Jewish leadership in the Temple days before His crucifixion. The Herodians attempted to trap Jesus using politics and the Sadducees attempted to trap Him using theology. In light of these attempts, we consider Jesus’ teaching on attitudes toward government taxation, church giving, after-life, and His identity as Messiah. All four serve Luke’s purpose to stabilize the wobbly faith of the God-lover by transforming the way we think about things temporal and eternal (cf. Luke 1:4).

Life Principle: Rendering to Caesar what belongs to God declares the truth of neither (Luke 20:25).

1. Seeing through the money - Luke 20:20-26; 21:1-4

Pretenders of righteousness flattered Jesus regarding His rectitude and teaching. They hoped that His ego might produce an imprudent answer to their question on taxation so that He could be arrested for tax rebellion. Instead, Jesus saw their little coins with their graven images as sufficient homage to pay to the makers they represent. He also saw human beings made in God’s image as sufficient homage to pay to the Maker they represent.

2. Seeing through this life - Luke 20:27-40

Jesus’ point on the resurrection life is clear - our eternal life before God has little comparison with our earthly life before Him here. There is no need for Levirate laws in eternity, thus the question is not a conundrum. Further, Moses made clear that resurrection is a reality, as taught by the Sadducees’ own literal interpretations of Torah. However, the reality of resurrection can only be seen and experienced through this life and into the next by the eyes and lives of sons in relation to God, whom the Sadducees by implication are not.

3. Seeing through the Son - Luke 20:41-47

Drawing from the positive response of a pleased Pharisee, Jesus impugns the pick and choose attitude of those who would use part of His teaching that appeals to them while rejecting His very personhood as both human and Divine. Hence, He gives a warning to His disciples to beware of external religious pretense which deceptively covers the damnable soul within.

For Further Study:

- Understanding the players in the context is often critical to interpretation of a passage. As a **Bible study method**, cross reference Luke 20:20, 27 with the parallel synoptic references. Look up the players in these texts using your internet search function. Why would the Herodians be interested in taxes and the Sadducees in Levirate law and resurrection? How does Jesus’ answer in Luke 20:25 correspond to Romans 13:1-8 and 1 Peter 2:13-25? Are we to pay taxes if some of the government money goes to abortion, euthanasia, pornography, or the support of religious cults? What did Jesus, Peter, and Paul teach?
- Luke 20:34-36 recounts Jesus’ teaching of an eternity without marriage. What are the original purposes for marriage (cf. Genesis 1:28; 2:18ff)? How did the Fall affect attitudes toward each other in the fulfillment of these purposes (cp. Genesis 2:23-24 ct. Genesis 3:16-19)? In light of these purpose statements, why would the disappearance of death at resurrection end the necessity of marriage?
- Jesus subtly affirms the coexistence of His Divine and His human nature using a question in Luke 20:41-44 (read also Hebrews 1:3-3:14). Our doctrinal statement professes belief in the same coexistence (see our **doctrinal statement ‘On Jesus Christ’** under **what we believe**, footnotes 5-6 at <http://www.gracepointfellowship.org/files/DocStmnt.pdf>). Historically this is called the doctrine of “hypostatic union.” Look up the meaning of this term on the *New Advent* website <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07610b.htm>. Why do you think such a concept is so difficult to grasp?

Transformation exercise:

Memorize Luke 20:25. Make a list with two columns: God and government. Each day list what you have given to God and to the government during the day (i.e., thoughts, finances, tax evasion, attitudes, words, etc.).