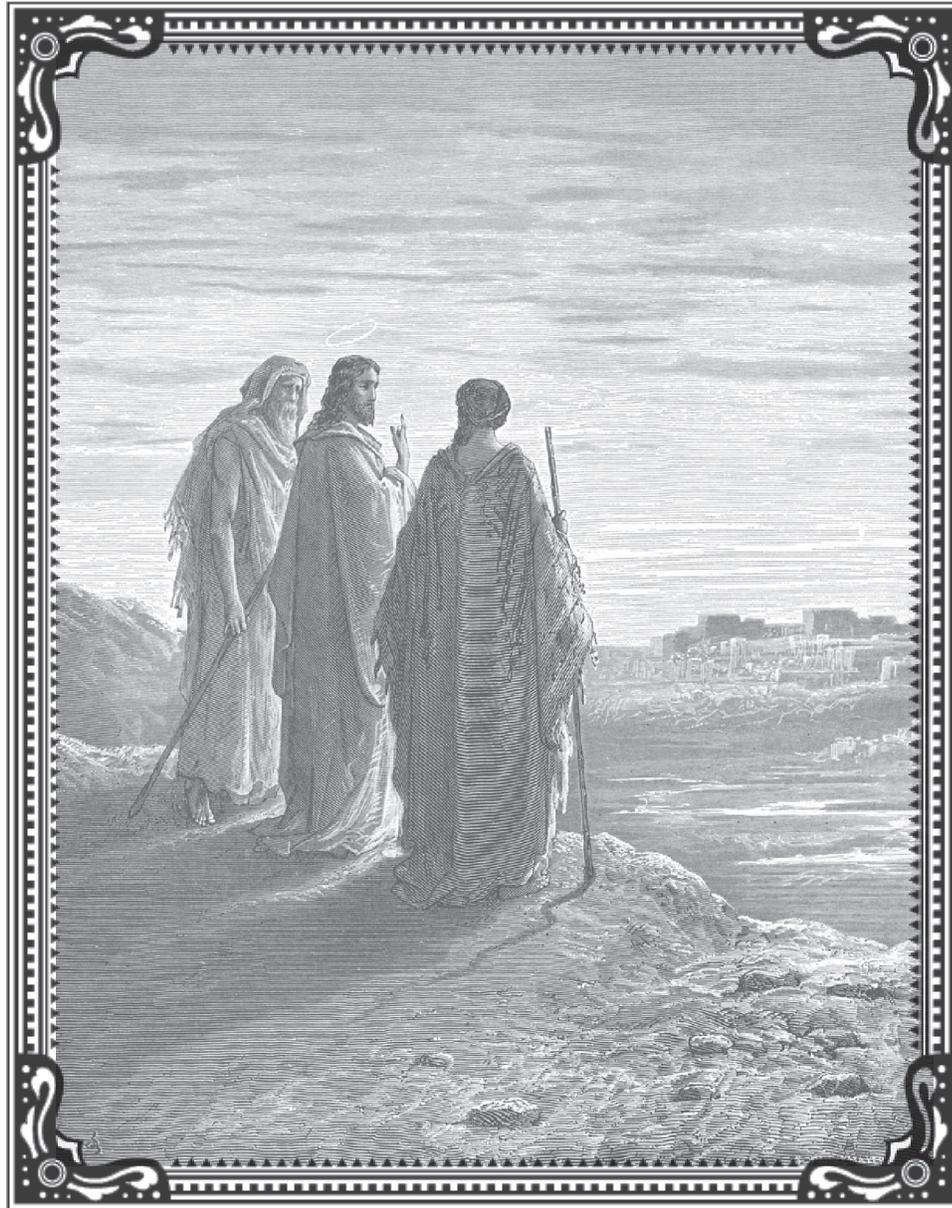


Studies in Luke



And their eyes were opened, and they knew him... Luke 24:31

 **Winter 2012**
Santa Barbara Community Church



Study Sources

TEXTS

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Bock | Darrell L. Bock, <i>The NIV Application Commentary: Luke</i> (Zondervan, 1996). |
| Bock Commentary | Darrell L. Bock, <i>Luke</i> , (Baker Academic, 1994), 2 volumes. |
| Green | Joel Green, <i>The Gospel of Luke: The New International Commentary on the New Testament</i> (Eerdmans, 1997). |
| Gundry | Robert Gundry, <i>Commentary on the New Testament</i> , (Hendrickson, 2010). |
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| Hughes | Kent Hughes, <i>Luke: That You May Know the Truth</i> (Crossway, 1998), 2 volumes. |
| Liefeld | Walter L. Liefeld, <i>Luke</i> , in <i>The Expositor's Bible Commentary</i> (Zondervan, 1984). |
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| Ryle | J.C. Ryle, <i>Luke</i> , in <i>The Crossway Classic Commentaries</i> (Crossway, 1997). |
| Wilcock | Michael Wilcock, <i>The Message of Luke in The Bible Speaks Today</i> (IVP 1979). |

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Studies 1, 2, and 3 were written by Steve Jolley; studies 4, 6, and 13 were written by Reed Jolley; studies 5 and 17 were written by Ryan Reed; studies 7, 8, and 9 were written by Mike Willbanks; studies 10, 11, and 12 were written by Benji Bruneel; studies 14 and 15 were written by Bonnie Fearer; studies 16 and 18 were written by Susi Lamoutte; and study 19 was written by Erik Anderson. Vijay Jayaraman wrote the prayer guides that end each study.

ARTWORK

Original art for studies 1 and 2 was created by Ryan Ethington. Artwork for all remaining studies are public domain digital renditions of historical artwork compiled by Ron Davis, as below. Graphic layout by Carolee Peterson.

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| Study 3 | Carl H. Bloch (1834-1890) |
| Study 4 | 19th century Bible storybook, <i>Half Hours With the Bible</i> , New Testament, New York: Clifton Publishing Company. |
| Study 5 | Gustave Doré (1832-1883) |
| Study 6 | Rembrandt Harmensz. Van Rijn, <i>Christ Driving the Money Changers from the Temple</i> , 1635. |
| Study 7 | James Joseph Jacques Tissot (1836-1902), <i>The Pharisees Question Jesus</i> |
| Study 8 | Caspar Luiken (1672-1708), <i>The Parable of the Tenants</i> |
| Study 9 | Gustave Doré (1832-1883) |

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- Study 10 Carl H. Bloch (1834-1890)
- Study 11 Pane from the window of St. Martin's on the Hill church, England, picturing King David. It is early work of William Morris (1834-1896)
- Study 12 Gustave Doré (1832-1883)
- Study 13 Jan Luyken (1649-1712)
- Study 14 Vintage engraving depicting Judas (far left) betraying Jesus to the Sanhedrin. Engraved after the work of Alexander Bida (1813-1895) and published in an 1875 collection of artwork featuring Christ.
- Study 15 Gustave Doré (1832-1883)
- Study 16 Vintage engraving depicting the Lord's Supper, with Jesus standing at the table of his disciples. Engraved after the artwork of Alexander Bida (1813-1895).
- Study 17 Gustave Doré (1832-1883)
- Study 18 Gustave Doré (1832-1883)
- Study 19 Gustave Doré (1832-1883)



Teaching Calendar

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| Study Three | Getting Closer Luke 18:31-43 | 13 | 2/6-9 | 2/12 |
| Study Four | Jesus and the Little Guy (Zacchaeus) Luke: 19:1-10 | 17 | 2/13-16 | 2/19 |
| Study Five | The Triumphal Entry Luke 19:28-44 | 21 | 2/20-23 | 2/26 |
| Study Six | Jesus in the Temple Luke 19:45-48 | 27 | 2/27-3/1 | 3/4 |
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| Study Eight | Falling on the Stone Luke 20:9-18 | 39 | 3/12-15 | 3/18 |
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| Study Twelve | Devouring Widows Luke 20:45-21:4 | 61 | 4/23-26 | 4/29 |

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Study One: Luke 17:20-37

Now and Not Yet

In Luke 17:20-37, Jesus is talking about the kingdom of God in response to a question of the Pharisees. These pious religious leaders want to know *when* the kingdom of God would come. As Jesus often does in the gospels, he takes a question, often veering, as an opportunity to teach. Read Luke 17:20-37. What stands out to you? What is unclear? What initial questions do you have of this passage?

Notice how our passage divides into two sections.

Verses 20-21 — Jesus addresses the Pharisees

Verses 22-37 — Jesus addresses his disciples

In verses 20-21, the Pharisees ask a question of Jesus. What do they want to know about the kingdom of God?

What is Jesus' answer to their question?

The Pharisees and many of their followers were looking forward to the arrival of an outward, tangible, earthly, visible kingdom. There was a hope for a literal return of David's monarchy and liberation from the tyranny of Roman oppression. The ministry of Jesus did not exactly look like what they were expecting. In verse 21, Jesus is saying that the kingdom is already here! The kingdom is not some future event but is here now.

Luke 17:21, is one of the more important verses in the New Testament about the kingdom of God. In fact, God's own King is here now! Translations of verse 21 vary a little in their struggle to capture the essence of Jesus' words.

kingdom of God is in your midst (NIV)

kingdom of God is in your midst (NASB)

kingdom of God is already among you (NLT)

kingdom of God is within you (1984 NIV, KJV)

kingdom of God is within you (NKJV)

God's reign is in your midst (Gundry)

It is obvious from these words of Jesus that the time of the kingdom is now. It is not a future event that is coming but rather a present reality found in Jesus. Pastor Kent Hughes says, *In Jesus Christ we find the kingdom of God. All that we know or need to know about God's kingdom is found in Christ.* (Hughes, 2, p. 176) How have you experienced what Jesus is talking about in verse 21? What does it mean for you that the *kingdom of God is in your midst*?

Commentator Darrell Bock makes the point that the thinking of the Pharisees about the kingdom of God would need to change in light of Jesus' words.

Jesus begins his reply by noting that the kingdom does not come with signs to be observed. This remark is important, because Jesus is challenging the idea that the kingdom is marked by some cosmic display. The Pharisees' expectations need changing. They will not need to point here and there and announce that they have found it, because the kingdom is *in their midst* or *within their reach*. Jesus' point is that the kingdom hope is present in his presence. All efforts to try and determine where it might be located are a waste of energy, given its proximity. (Bock, p. 451)

Does anything need to change in *your* thinking about the where and when of God's kingdom? If so, what needs to change?

The focus of Jesus' comments now shifts from the Pharisees to his disciples in verses 22-37. In answering the Pharisees' question, an opportunity presents itself for Jesus to give his disciples some more instruction on the kingdom. Having just said that the kingdom of God is here now, *in the midst of you*, Jesus goes on to describe the future of the kingdom and the future coming of the *Son of Man*.¹ When the Son of Man comes, it will be a day of judgment.

¹ The *Son of Man* is Jesus' favorite way of referring to himself. He uses this self-designation over 80 times in the Gospels. It is a messianic title that looks back to the mysterious human-divine figure called *one like a son of man* described in Daniel 7:13-14.

In verses 22-37, what does Jesus say about his return and the coming judgment?

To what is Jesus referring in verse 25? Why does he have to *suffer many things*? (see Isaiah 53:2-3; Luke 9:22, 24:45-47)

Jesus uses some Old Testament stories to help make his point about how the coming of the *Son of Man* will take place. How is Jesus using these stories? What is his point?

days of Noah (Genesis 6-9)

days of Lot (Genesis 19)

The people of Noah's day and Lot's day were engaged in the ordinary affairs of life: going to work, eating, drinking, AYSO games, watching television, playing with their iPhone, and investing in the stock market. At one level, there was and is nothing wrong with that. What was wrong, and is wrong, is when our minds and hearts are entirely absorbed in these pursuits. When we live self-centered, self-absorbed lives, it so marginalizes God that for all practical purposes he ceases to exist for us.

Jesus points out that we need to consider Lot's wife in verse 32. What happened to Lot's wife?

After the illustration of Lot's wife Jesus says, *Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it* (v. 33). In our study of Luke's gospel we have previously looked at this statement of Jesus (with slightly different phraseology). Remind yourself again of what Jesus meant when he said this. Be very practical in answering this question. What is one way you specifically can apply it to your life?

Our passage ends with two more brief illustrations. Two people, whether in bed or grinding grain, will be separated. The picture is of the division of the righteous from the unrighteous. How does verse 37 give a rather grotesque picture of how this separation ends?

Bob Gundry helps us to see what is happening in this sober warning.

Vultures are attracted to a carcass that has been left. And in the stories of Noah and Lot, recently alluded to in 17:26-29, 32, those who were left suffered God's judgment. So Jesus is saying that on the day of his revelation, there will be a separation in which disciples will be taken so as to be spared judgment, as were Noah and Lot; and nondisciples will be left as carrion that attracts the vultures, representing divine judgment. (Gundry, p. 310)

Think about your life. How do you know that you will not be the one left in bed or grinding grain? What is the basis of your security? As a homegroup remind each other why believers need not fear God's wrath and judgment. Be ready to share verses from the Bible that encourage you in this regard.

In Luke 17:20-37, we have seen that the kingdom of God is both now and not yet. The kingdom is a present reality and an anticipated future. As we live between the first and second coming of Jesus, Christians enjoy the blessing of knowing Christ, and his indwelling Holy Spirit now, but look forward to the fullness of this blessing in the future. In light of this spiritual reality, how should the believer be living as we wait for the coming of the *Son of Man*?

Praying the Passage: Luke 17:20-37

- Give thanks for how the kingdom is already here! Speak scriptures to one another about what God has already done, such as giving us new birth into a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1Peter 1:3-9) or making us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions (Ephesians 2:4-9).
- Add to these scriptural proclamations praises for the specific ways the kingdom has come in history and in our lives. Consider and remember how God has forgiven our sins and healed our diseases (Psalm 103:3). Give testimony to the miraculous. As you proclaim/remember these things, consider repeating Luke 18:21b as a litany:

The kingdom of God is among you.

- Spend some time telling God and each other about the not yet of the kingdom. Tell Him what we long for (Luke 18:22), such as seeing that day when the grave has no final victory and death has no sting (1Corinthians 15:55). Ask God for grace and help in trials as we wait.
- Confess the things that preoccupy and distract us from the kingdom, such as eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. (Luke 17:28) Pray that we would know that the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).
- Pray for each other by name, that you would lose your life to save it (Luke 17:33) and be ready for Christ's return.
- Pray for those alongside whom we work and live (Luke 17:30-36), that they too, would accept the Son of Man, and be ready for His return.
- Finish by reciting aloud together the Lord's (disciples') prayer:

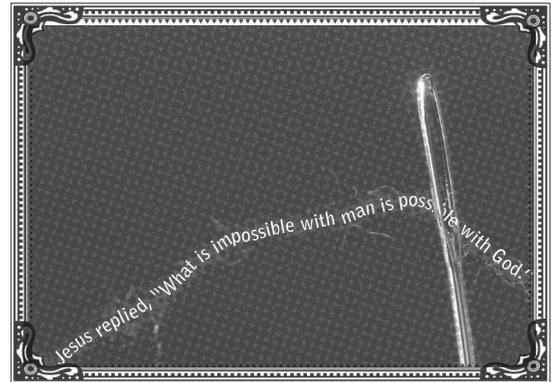
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. (Matthew 6:9-11)

Study Two: Luke 18:18-30

The Rich Ruler

How we handle and relate to our money is a big deal. It is both a practical life issue and a spiritual issue. It has to do with our salvation. Jesus talked a lot about money, and Luke's gospel in particular records numerous discussions about wealth and the related issue of generosity.¹ One of the more famous passages in the gospels on wealth is Luke 18:18-30 and Jesus' conversation with a rich ruler. We know from Matthew's gospel (Matthew 19:22) that this rich man was also a young man. Many commentators think he may also have been an important civil magistrate.

The Pharisees often asked Jesus questions in an effort to trap him. His reply to such questions was frequently hard-hitting and confrontational. Jesus knew they were disingenuous and insincere. Here, however, the rich ruler appears to be very sincere in his question.



Read Luke 18:18-30. Many of those working through this study will be familiar with this story and, as a result, may be tempted to breeze over the text with a casual confidence. Slow down and try to actually read the text in a fresh way. Look for details. Try to understand what is at stake in this conversation. Take some preliminary notes as to what is clear, unclear, and what questions you have of this story.

How does the rich man address Jesus?

Before getting to the issue of riches, Jesus responds with a question of his own. The rich ruler describes Jesus as *good*. It seems to be a teachable moment. Jesus asks, *Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone* (v. 19). What is the point of Jesus' question in verse 19?

¹ These are some of the many passages in Luke's gospel that address the issue of wealth and generosity. 3:11; 5:11; 6:23-26, 34-36; 8:3, 14; 10:33-35; 11:42; 12:13-21, 33-34; 14:12-14, 33; 16:1-14, 19-31; 18:22; 19:8.

The rich ruler asks the most important question a person can ask. *What must I do to inherit eternal life?* What is Jesus' initial response in verse 20?

This rich ruler, at least by his own estimation, had been faithful in obeying the Old Testament commandments. According to Jesus, (v. 22) what is the one thing he still lacked? What does Jesus tell him he should do?

The external countenance of the young ruler tells the story. How did his face convey his response to the request of Jesus?

The Bible's teaching on wealth is challenging and never simplistic or easily reduced to a formula. Many passages in the Old Testament teach that wealth is a blessing from God, while others take the rich to task for their lack of generosity. Our passage requires us to consider Jesus' view of wealth. Look at the statements below where Jesus talks about money, including the Luke passages we have already studied. Refresh your memory. Write down principles you find.

Matthew 6:19-21

Luke 12:13-21

Luke 16:13

Luke 16:19-31

What is the issue that Jesus is getting at here with the young ruler? Is the point of Jesus' words about a money issue or a heart issue? What is the relationship between our money and our heart?

With the picture of a camel that can't squeeze through the eye of a needle (v. 25), Jesus gives what Bob Gundry calls, a *humorously ironic hyperbole*. (Gundry, p. 314) The point is that it is really difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.¹ Why is it so hard for rich people to be saved and know God? How have you seen this principle at work in the lives of others? How about your own life?

With wealth often comes power, self-sufficiency and at times arrogance. Read 1Timothy 6:3-10, 17. According to these verses why is wealth dangerous? Look again at 1Timothy 6:17 and pay special attention to the words, *arrogant* and *hope*. How does this verse help you to understand Luke 18 and the rich ruler?

Commenting on Luke 18:18-30 Pastor Kent Hughes makes this point. Ponder and respond.

We need to hear what Jesus was really saying, and to hear it well: **wealth is a handicap!** We think the rich to be overprivileged. Jesus said they were underprivileged. . . . There is a proper fear of being rich. There are disadvantages to having wealth — primarily what it can do to the soul. How easy it is for an earnest man or woman to become attached to material riches that he or she forgets what is infinitely more important. Wealth can pervert one's values. We soon know the price of everything and the value of nothing. (Hughes, 2, p. 208)

¹ Some commentators have had a field day with Jesus' statement, *For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God!* It has been suggested that, *The Needle's Eye*, might have been a narrow gate that was an entrance to Jerusalem or that some manuscripts have *rope* instead of *camel*. It is best to take the statement for what it is. Jesus is using an illustration to shock us.

Is this passage a call for all Christians to embrace a life of asceticism, giving up all their worldly wealth? Does Luke 18 teach that salvation is found in an empty bank account?

How do these words of Jesus to the rich man speak to you personally? What practical steps can you take to apply the principles in this passage? How are you tempted to squirm out from under the weight of what Jesus says?

At one level our passage for this study is about money. But it is about much more than just wealth. Notice the key words in our text.

Eternal life (v. 18)

Treasure in heaven (v. 22)

Enter the kingdom of God (vv. 24, 25, 29)

Who can be saved? (v. 26)

Eternal life (v. 30)

What else is Jesus trying to teach in this passage? How are the issues of wealth, money, power, self-sufficiency, and salvation in Jesus related?

Peter and the disciples are very concerned about their own salvation and eternal life (vv. 26-30). What comfort does Jesus give to his perplexed followers? How does his answer comfort you?

What practical steps will you take in your Christian life this week as a result of having spent time in Luke 18:18-30?

Praying the Passage: Luke 18:18-30

- As we encounter the “hard sayings of Jesus,” as in this passage, tell Jesus that He alone has the words of eternal life, and that we can and will go to no one else (John 6:68-69). Tell God our intention to trust and obey His word, rather than go away sad as the ruler did.
- Confess the weakness of your faith, your fears, your attachment to material or other earthly things, your besetting sins, and your struggle to yield them to God. Consider encouraging one another in these things by repeating aloud verse 27:

What is impossible with men is possible with God.

- Pray that the Jesus’ instruction about money in this passage would become to us an easy yoke and a light burden (Matthew 11:28-30) as we embrace it. Thank Him that His commands are not burdensome (1John 5:3)!
- Pray for each other to lose your life so you may save it. Pray over difficult circumstances that have resulted from following Christ (e.g., singleness because you will marry only a Christ-worshipping person). Ask Jesus to make real to you the promises in verses 29-30.
- Pray for those who may be reluctant to answer God’s call because of concerns about money—that they would trust Jesus to supply their needs. Ask God to raise up a generation of laborers for the harvest, who will fulfill the great commission without stumbling over money.
- Pray for our missionaries and many of our own local pastors, who have sacrificed higher paying careers for the sake of the gospel, that God would abundantly supply their needs according His riches in Christ Jesus.
- Pray for the persecuted church to be strengthened with a conviction that eternal rewards will far outweigh their temporal sacrifices.

Study Three: Luke 18:31-43

Getting Closer

As Jesus travels to Jerusalem the end is getting closer. Undoubtedly his thoughts were on the suffering he would soon endure. Jesus is preparing for what lies ahead. He is also preparing his disciples for his death and resurrection. His statement in Luke 18:31-34 about what will transpire could not have been clearer or more direct.

Read Luke 18:31-43. Write down some initial thoughts and questions you have of this passage. Give some thought to the connection between Jesus' announcement of his imminent death and resurrection and the miracle of the blind man's restored sight. What is the relationship between this announcement and the miracle?



In verses 31-34, Jesus once again plainly predicts his death. This is the sixth direct allusion to his death in Luke's gospel and the fourth passage to mention the *Son of Man* dying (9:22, 44; 17:25). Review these other times that Jesus has talked about his death. What do you see in these passages? What is unique about Luke 18:31-34 in comparison to the scriptures listed below?

Luke 5:35

Luke 9:22

Luke 9:44-45

Luke 12:49-50

Luke 13:32-33

Luke 17:25

As Jesus heads to Jerusalem, it is obvious that nothing catches him off guard. He is on a mission. He came to fulfill what was *written about the Son of Man by the prophets*. The events that are about to occur were a part of God's design. The cross was planned. After Jesus' resurrection, the disciples looked back on his death. How does the fact that God planned his death change how the disciples understood Jesus' death?

How does this fact inform how *you* understand the death of Jesus? What difference does it make that his death was planned?

The disciples simply don't understand what Jesus is saying or what will happen in Jerusalem. They probably reasoned in their minds, *He doesn't literally mean he will die and rise again!* When you think about it, this is pretty amazing. They have been with Jesus for three years, night and day, his passion in Jerusalem is days away, and they still don't get what is about to occur. Why is this the case? Why was what Jesus must do *hidden from them* and beyond their *grasp*?

Respond to this comment from Darrell Bock about the disciple's blindness.

The text reveals how we are sometimes slow to see what God is doing, because our expectations prevent us from seeing it. No doubt part of the disciples' problem was their expectation of seeing something instant and awesome from Jesus in coming to set up the kingdom. The blind spot of false expectations caused them to pass by the difficult moments of his ministry. We sometimes handle God's promises similarly and create an imbalance in expectations. (Bock, p. 475)

Have there been times in your life that your spiritual expectations have blinded you from seeing what God is doing? Give examples.

Try to picture in your mind the scene described in verses 35-43. Jericho is seventeen miles from Jerusalem, seven hundred feet below sea level, and often very hot. As Jesus and his disciples make their way to Jerusalem to observe Passover, they are most likely joined by other pilgrims. For the blind beggar, the day probably began like any other day of his life (Mark's gospel identifies this blind man as Bartimaeus, Mark 10:46-51). But soon everything would change in his life.

Notice that twice the blind beggar cries out, *Son of David*. This is the only time in Luke's gospel that someone addresses Jesus with this title. What does it mean that Jesus is the *Son of David*? Why is this important at this point in Luke's story?

The people try to hush up the loud cries of the blind beggar. Why do they rebuke him and tell him to be silent?

In Luke's gospel, miracles often point to deeper spiritual realities. This miracle, of the blind beggar receiving his sight, is a picture of how faith leads to spiritual restoration. How are blindness and sight an illustration of our spiritual state?

Look at the verses listed below. How do they help you see how blindness and sight teach us about the gospel message?

Matthew 11:4-6

Matthew 23:16, 17, 19, 24

Mark 10:51-52

John 9:1-41 (give special attention to vv. 35-41)

Describe what it was like for you to be spiritually blind before you had faith in Christ.

Now describe what it was like when you received your spiritual sight. Was it gradual or sudden?

Look at verses 35-42 one more time. What was required of the blind beggar to gain his sight? What are the steps for any of us to gain our spiritual sight?

As a homegroup spend some time rejoicing in the gift of being able to see Jesus Christ!

Praying the Passage: Luke 18:31-43

- Praise God that the Scriptures are trustworthy, and that all will be fulfilled (v. 31)!
- Praise God for Jesus, who willingly endured death on a cross for our sake (vv. 31-32)! Praise God that Jesus was raised (v. 33).
- Confess that like the disciples, we are slow to understand God's purposes and plans. Confess ways in which we subtly skip over the cross of Jesus—and the cross we may be called to carry—and jump straight to His triumph.
- Confess that we are prone to spiritual blindness just as the disciples were (v. 34).
- Pray for one another, that God would open our eyes to spiritual realities (Ephesians 1:18), just as He opened the eyes of the blind beggar.
- Boldly pray for God to intervene supernaturally in each other's lives in your homegroup, whether it be for healing or for other needs. Consider repeating verse 38b as a litany:

Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.

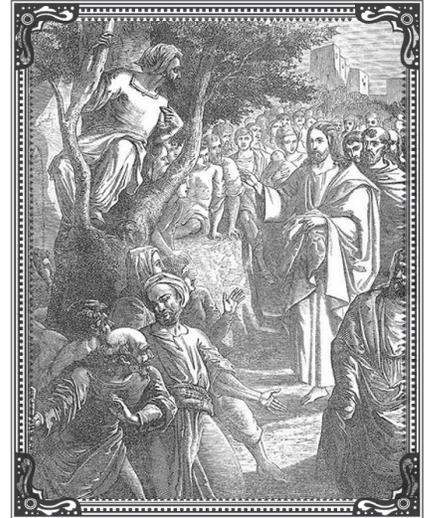
- Pray for those we know who are blind to Jesus, that God would grant them repentance and new life.
- Just as the passage ends with praise, end your time praising God for ways He has heard your prayers. Consider finishing with a song or hymn of praise, such as *Great is Thy Faithfulness*, or *Forever*.

Study Four: Luke 19:1-10

Jesus and the Little Guy (Zacchaeus)

Zacchaeus was a wee little man
 And a wee little man was he.
 He climbed way up in a sycamore tree,
 For the Lord he wanted to see. . .

So goes part of a song many children are taught before they can even pronounce this fellow's name. The story of Zacchaeus is one of those immortal Sunday School stories that has been told and re-told throughout the history of the church. Jesus' long, unhurried journey to Jerusalem is about to come to its conclusion. Jericho is the last stop before the City of David, and Zacchaeus is the last personal conversation we hear between Jesus and another during this journey which began in Luke 9:51.



Zacchaeus is a thrice hated person. First, he is a tax collector, and not only that, the text tells us he was a *chief* tax collector. Zacchaeus has other tax collectors working for him. They extort what taxes they can and turn over the proceeds to Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus then gives to Rome what Rome requires and keeps the rest of the money as his own. This means he was at the top of the economic pyramid. Second, Jericho is a wealthy city in its own right and the city was at the crossroads of several travel routes through Israel. The tax business must have been robust. Third, he is short. As strange as it may seem to our sensibilities, people with physical abnormalities in first century Israel were shamed and scorned. It is safe to say, Zacchaeus was a hated man.

Before going any further in this study, read these ten verses. Make notes of the details Luke includes in this story (who, what, where, when, why, etc.). What questions come to your mind as you read?

Examine the context of the Zacchaeus story. It comes after two other personal-encounter stories. First, we have the story of the rich ruler (18:18-30), and then the story of the poor, blind beggar (18:35-43). How does the story of Zacchaeus relate to these other two?

Luke 19:4

Notice the earnestness and humility of Zacchaeus to get to Jesus. He is a rich man and he does two things that would have required losing face among the people of Jericho. What are those two things? Did you have to humble yourself before your friends, family, and colleagues in order to get to Jesus? What was that like? Share with your homegroup.

Luke 19:5-6

Notice the sequence of verbs in these verses (*looked, said, hurried, came down, received*). How do these verbs describe the process of salvation? Who does the looking? Who speaks? Etcetera.

Luke 19:5

It has been pointed out that this is the only place in the Gospels where Jesus goes to a house uninvited. *Christ sometimes comes to those who do not seek him.* (Ryle, p. 243)

Compare Isaiah 65:1. What does this teach us about the love of God?

Luke 19:6

How does Zacchaeus receive Jesus? Describe the similarity or dissimilarity of your experience with Christ.

Luke 19:8

This verse is remarkable. What happens to Zacchaeus when Jesus comes to his house?

The Old Testament law did not require Zacchaeus' generosity. Restitution was to consist of the original debt plus 20% (see Leviticus 5:6; Numbers 5:7). When Zacchaeus says, *If I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold*, he is promising to divest himself of a huge amount of his wealth. Zacchaeus had made his living defrauding everyone in his path.

Compare Jesus' words in Luke 18:24-25 with the story of Zacchaeus. What do we learn when we put 18:24-25 next to 19:9?

We learn from 19:8 that *converted sinners will always give evidence of their conversion*. (Ryle, p. 242)

What is the evidence of your conversion? Have you had to make restitution to anyone since you have been converted?

Luke 19:9

Literally this verse reads, *Today salvation has taken place in this house*.

As Gundry writes,

The salvation has "taken place" because it's an event. And it's an event in that Jesus' coming has effected it, almost as though through his coming into the house is the event of salvation. (Gundry, p. 316)

Describe what it was like when Jesus came to your *house*.

Zacchaeus was hindered in his effort to see Jesus by his physical stature. What hinders you from *seeing* Jesus?

J. C. Ryle, commenting on this section of Luke, marvels over the great good news of God's love and forgiveness. Read, enjoy, and give God thanks as you read the following quotation:

The door of hope which the Gospel reveals to sinners is open very wide. Let us leave it open, as we find it; let us not attempt, in narrow-minded ignorance, to shut it. We should never be afraid to maintain that Christ is able to save completely (Hebrews 7:25) and that the vilest sinners may be freely forgiven if they will only come to him. We should offer the Gospel boldly to the worst and wickedest and say, "There is hope. Only repent and believe. 'Though your sins are scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are crimson, they shall be like wool'" (Isaiah 1:18).

Zacchaeus would have been thought of as one of those completely outside the scope of Jesus' ministry and message. Here we find a hardened, greedy, selfish man that no one would have expected to respond to Jesus. Do you have a friend or a family member like Zacchaeus? Spend some time as a homgroup praying that Jesus will come to that person's house. Ask God for what seems impossible.

He looked up in that tree
 And He said, "Zacchaeus, you come down!
 For I'm going to your house today
 For I'm going to your house to stay.

Praying the Passage: Luke 19:1-10

- Praise God that He saves all kinds—tax collectors, artists, engineers, rich, poor, educated, uneducated, short people and tall people! Thank God specifically for the salvation stories of your own homgroup. Consider repeating verse 9a as a litany:

Today, salvation has come to this house.

- Confess any prejudice you may feel toward individuals or people groups that, like Zacchaeus the tax collector, may seem to you unlikely to receive the Son of God.
- Let the earnestness of Zacchaeus inspire you to dedicate yourself and all you have to God anew. Tell God your intentions to serve and honor Him just as Zacchaeus did in verse 19:8. Ask him to reveal to you if there is anything for which He wants you to make restitution, as Zacchaeus did.
- Pray for this good news to spread to the lost (v. 10). Pray for your friends, family, circle of influence, and your city. Let your prayers expand to people groups and nations. Consider repeating verse 10 as a litany, as you petition Jesus to complete the work He began on earth through His people:

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.

Study Five: Luke 19:28-44

The Triumphal Entry

In Luke 19:28, we find Jesus continuing to journey towards Jerusalem. Before this passage is over, he will be within the city walls beginning the last week of his life. Jesus has been steadily making his way to Jerusalem, stopping off at Jericho where he heals a blind beggar and meets Zacchaeus. Now, in this passage, Jesus arrives at Bethany where he stops at the Mount of Olives.



The Mount of Olives is a favorite place for Jesus. We can only wonder if Jesus stops here to take in the beauty, to pray, or to consider all that is before him. In Jesus' day, this mount would have been covered with olive orchards and rich with fruit. Today, it is a rocky, desolate hill outside Jerusalem. It is from this beautiful olive grove that Jesus sends the disciples to retrieve a colt from the city, and from here that he will descend into the city for what we call *The Triumphal Entry*. It is here that Jesus will weep over Jerusalem, where he will deliver the *Olivet Discourse*, and here, in one short week, Jesus will return to pray with his disciples as they fall asleep. It is from the Mount of Olives that Jesus will cry out to his Father, *Not my will but yours be done*. Finally, it will be from the Mount of Olives that Jesus will ascend into heaven some forty days after his resurrection.

Read Luke 19:28-40 slowly. What parts of this passage stand out to you? What images impress you? Are there any confusing or puzzling verses?

Jesus is Messiah

Jesus has spent the last three years teaching about the kingdom of God and performing miracles. Jesus enters Jerusalem as the messiah, the long awaited savior of Israel. Even so, he was not the kind of messiah that the Jews had been expecting. Most popular expectations believed that Messiah would be a revolutionary. The people were hoping for a political or military leader who would bring deliverance from the oppression of Rome. Few, if any, were looking for a messiah who would bring spiritual deliverance.

In Christ, however, comes a messiah that is less than they expected but everything they needed. It is because Jesus doesn't meet their expectation that he will be killed.

What do you think the people were looking for in *Messiah*? What are people looking for in a messiah today?

Why do you think his arrival in Jerusalem cost Jesus his life?

How do you still *miss* what Jesus is doing sometimes?

Up to this point, Jesus had not made a big case for messiahship, but now through the entry into Jerusalem on a colt, he will make it abundantly clear that this is exactly who he is. From this point on the prophecies begin to be fulfilled at an increasingly rapid pace.

Read 19:30-34

This is a miraculous event for both the disciples and the colt owners. How do you think you would have responded as either party?

For three years the disciples have witnessed Jesus performing miracles. They have just experienced him restoring sight to a blind man on their way to Bethany. In a few days, they will be instructed to go into the city, to find a man carrying a jug of water, to follow him, and to ask him where the room is in which the master may eat the Passover.

How did Jesus' followers respond to this request? Why?

With that background in mind, how do you think you would have responded?

Prophecy Fulfilled

What might get lost in this passage is the fact that God had already prepared everything needed for Jesus to fulfill the Messianic prophecy of Zechariah. The colt is ready for Jesus to ride on. The Greek word for *colt* is *polos*, and it denotes a particular type of donkey, specifically one of a particular age and maturity. This is not just any mangy mare— this is a young colt, a never ridden foal. Matthew tells us that it is so young, that when the disciples find it, it is still with its mother. *You will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her.* (Matthew 21:2)

This is important because it's exactly how God, 500 years earlier through the prophet Zechariah, promised Messiah would come into Jerusalem.

Read Zechariah 9:9. How did Jesus' entry into Jerusalem fulfill Zechariah 9:9?

Why do these details seem to matter so much to God?

What does the manner of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem tell us about the nature of his mission? What is Jesus saying by the way he enters Jerusalem?

Could Jesus have come into the city a different way?

If Jesus had come as they expected – in power and glory – what would have happened?

What does this passage teach us about how we should go about the Lord's work?

Why do people begin to throw their cloaks down (v. 36)?

What are the people shouting in this passage? Why? (compare with Matthew 21:9)

Do not miss the high drama of the moment. Jesus of Nazareth, the outspoken country boy who had been a leader of peasants and working class people, is now coming into Jerusalem with the swelling shouts of *Hosanna, Hosanna. Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!* (Matthew 21:19, Luke 19:38)

In verse 39, the Pharisees are upset at the reception Jesus is receiving. Why are they so upset?

How does Jesus respond to their request to silence the crowds?

Jesus Weeps

Read verses 41-44. What does this say about Jesus?

Contemplate and discuss what these verses reveal about . . .

Jesus' heart:

The hearts of those in Jerusalem:

The future of those over whom he weeps:

What should we learn for our own Christian lives from this passage? What lessons are there for us as we live in a fallen world? Spend time praying for one another in these areas.

Praying the Passage: Luke 19:28-44

- Read out loud Zechariah 9:9-10 (again). Praise God for the fulfillment of this prophecy here in Luke. Praise God that His words are true, and that He will fulfill all.
- Praise God for the humility of God, not only in the incarnation, but in the manner of His coming into Jerusalem. Consider Him who made himself nothing (Philippians 2:6-8).
- Revere the coming King, by repeating verse 38, as you feel led, adding your own praises if you wish. If there are children in your group, you might invite them to join you in repeating verse 38:

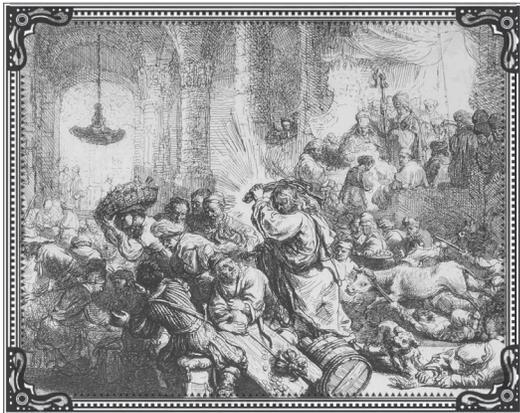
Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!

- Confess the ways that we, the church, like the Jews, have failed to recognize the time of His coming. Confess our preoccupation with earthly things, and our blindness to kingdom happenings and opportunities around us.
- Pray for the church to be saturated in scripture and Spirit-filled, that we might understand the signs of the times. Ask that we would be spared a judgment like the one Jerusalem suffered in the siege of 70AD. Ask God to deal with our sin gently, to soften hearts, and to bring revival instead of judgment.
- Ask God to prepare His bride worldwide, that Jesus may return and consummate history.

Study Six: Luke 19:45-48

Jesus in the Temple

Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. (Malachi 3:1-2)



The temple in Jerusalem was the center of Jewish worship. The temple was the place where the people met with God. It was to the temple that devout Jews were to travel three times annually. Each year the people would come for the Feast of Passover, the Feast of Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. It was in the temple that sacrifices were offered for the sins of the people. Again, the temple was the center of Israel's life and worship.

King Solomon built the first temple in the 10th century BC. That temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in the sixth century BC. The temple was rebuilt during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah some years later. In the year 19BC, Herod the Great began a

remodeling project that was still in process during the time of Jesus. Herod's project turned the temple area into one of the wonders of the ancient world. For an artist's representation of this magnificent structure, see the ESV Study Bible, pp. 1924-1925. The ESV Study Bible notes,

Herod's Temple Mount was the focal point of Jerusalem during the time of Jesus. Sitting atop Jerusalem's northeastern ridge, it occupied one-sixth of the city's area. Under Herod the Great, the Temple Mount's foundation was expanded to encompass approximately 1.5 million square feet (140,000 square meters). Its foundational walls were constructed using gigantic stones, the largest found being 45 feet long, 11.5 feet high, and 12 feet thick (13.7 m by 3.5 m by 3.7 m).

Architecturally the temple compound was a series of rectangles. First there was the Court of the Gentiles. Anyone could enter this court: Jews, Gentiles, men, and women. Next was the Court of Women. Both Jewish women and men could enter this court. Next was the Court of the Israelites, which was reserved for Jewish men. Then there was the Court of the Priests, reserved for priests alone who would perform the daily sacrifices for the sins of the people.

Think about the role the temple in the life of Jesus.

- It was near the inner sanctum, the Holy of Holies, where the angel Gabriel announced the birth of Messiah's forerunner, John the Baptist (Luke 1:11-20).

- In one of the courts of the temple, Simeon realized that he had seen the Lord's Messiah when he saw the baby Jesus (Luke 2:29-32).
- It was in the temple that Jesus announces to his parents that he has a mission larger than playing his part as their son in Nazareth (Luke 2:49).
- Satan tempted Jesus by taking him, in a vision, to the highest point in the temple and dared him to jump so as to reveal his messianic powers before the proper time (Luke 4:9).

In Luke 19:45-48 it is probably Tuesday of the final week of Jesus' life. Jesus has three days to live, and, as the passage reads, *he entered the temple*. Why is this phrase significant?

Read this short passage a few times. Jot down any thoughts your initial reading brings to mind.

Now compare the slightly longer versions of this incident given in Matthew and Mark. What do these writers add to Luke's brief account?

Matthew 21:12-17

Mark 11:15-18

Clearly, this incident takes place in the Court of the Gentiles. It was there that the temple, which God intended to be a place of sanctuary and prayer, had become a commercial market place. Corruption and profit were the order of the day. If people brought their own animals to be sacrificed there was a good chance the priests would reject them as imperfect. One had to buy an official sacrifice which was sold at a greatly inflated price.

Luke 19:45

As Jesus enters the outer court what exactly does he do? Does this surprise you? How does this shape your understanding of Jesus?

Respond to the following quotation:

Now, Jesus is indeed the meekest, gentlest person who ever lived. He himself said, truthfully, “for I am gentle and humble in heart” (Matthew 11:29), and also taught us, “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). But meekness is not weakness. It is, rather, strength under control. Meekness has the strength not to defend oneself (Jesus when he went to the cross, for example). But meekness will boldly defend others. And on this occasion Jesus struck out in defense of the holiness of God the Father. (Hughes, 2, p. 247)

Is there ever a time for us to use similar tactics as we seek to advance the kingdom of God? Explain.

Jesus explains his actions by citing two Old Testament passages– one from Isaiah and the other from Jeremiah.

Isaiah 56:7 is set in a prophecy which foretells of the time when all nations will come and worship in Jerusalem. *Foreigners* will come to Jerusalem to worship in the temple,

... for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. (Isaiah 56:7)

The second quotation comes from Jeremiah 7:11, *but you have made it a den of robbers*. This comes from Jeremiah’s well-known Temple sermon, where he castigates the people of Jerusalem for their empty worship. Their lives are full of sin, yet they come to the temple for worship thinking they are *safe*. Jeremiah says, essentially, unless they repent they will endure the wrath of God.

With the above in mind, explain what Jesus is saying to those still left in the Court of the Gentiles?

What does Jesus' action in the temple have to say to the church of the 21st century? What does this passage say to us? Respond to the following quotation:

If the Lord were to come into this world today and here and now, He would not go to Washington and assault political powers, He would go to the churches and He would attack the heretics and the hypocrites and the exploiters and the phonies and the fakes, and He would call for true worship of His Father. As long as things are wrong in the temple, then everything else is chaos. The measure of any society is its relationship to God. Worship is always the issue, always. Judgment has to begin at the house of God.¹

Before the finished work of Christ on the cross, the Jews went to the temple to meet with God. After the work of Christ, we find that God meets us personally. Paul will be so bold to say that our very body is a temple of God (1Corinthians 6:19), God dwells with us in the person of the Holy Spirit! Elsewhere Paul refers to the church as the temple where God dwells (1Corinthians 3:16). So let us personalize this passage. What tables would Jesus overturn in our lives? What money changers would he drive out of your outer court? What preemptive action would Jesus take in our church?

As we noted above, Jesus is in the temple just days before he is executed by the people he came to save. The biblical irony is dramatic. Compare the following verses and talk about them with your homegroup. Explain the irony of what is taking place as Jesus cleanses the Court of the Gentiles.

Luke 20:17-18

John 2:13-22

¹ From an unpublished sermon manuscript, John MacArthur, May 13, 2007.

² In John's Gospel, Jesus cleanses the temple at the very beginning of his ministry.

Jesus was in the temple, but we learn on further reflection, Jesus replaced the temple. He is the temple. He is the place where we meet and know God. Jesus is the one who offers the only true sacrifice. And that sacrifice is his own blood. Talk about the following verses and then rejoice. Pray, praise, give thanks.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:19-25)

Praying the Passage: Luke 19:45-48

- Praise God for His temple—Jesus Christ. Read aloud Hebrews 10:19-25 if you haven't already. Thank Him for the privilege of dwelling in Christ. Declare the goodness of God's house. Consider reading scriptures that declare this, such as Psalm 27: 4-6, or Psalm 84.
- Praise God for the church, and how you have seen Him dwell among us in our own church and other local churches.
- Confess the ways the church has not been the church. Confess prayerlessness and preoccupation with consumerism and worldly concerns. Ask for God to restore Sabbath rest to the church, that we might carve out a day when we cease buying, selling, and striving, and focus on being still and knowing that He is God.
- Pray for the teaching in the temple (v. 47), that our preachers and those of our local churches may speak as one speaking the very words of God as Jesus did, and that we would treasure and hang onto these words (v. 48).
- Pray for our church to be a house of prayer. Ask that prayer would be central to our understanding of the church's mission. Pray for our corporate prayer meetings to overflow!
- Pray for each homegroup member to grow in intimacy with Christ through daily prayer.
- Practice being a house of prayer in your own homegroup. Pray for each other by name, lifting up needs and concerns. Expand your prayers to the community and to the nations, *praying all kinds of prayers for all the saints* (Ephesians 6:18).

Study Seven: Luke 20:1-8

The Authority of Jesus

As we saw in the last study, since Jesus arrived in Jerusalem he has been regularly teaching in the temple. He has become something of a lightning rod—some were infuriated by his teaching and behavior to the point they want to kill him. Many others are *hanging on his words* (19:49). As we begin chapter 20, we find him again teaching in the temple and the religious leaders are offended. How often have you heard an offended person say, *Who do you think you are? What gives you the right to ___?*



Read Luke 20:1-8. What is going on here? What specific aspects of the dialogue stand out to you?

The Jewish leaders demand to know by what authority he was doing *these things*. What *things* in particular do you think they had in mind?

What do you think Jesus was teaching? What was *the gospel* he was preaching (v. 1)?

Authority is a recurring theme in Luke's gospel. How do the following passages demonstrate the authority of Jesus? Are there other passages that come to mind that testify to the authority of Jesus?

Luke 4:31-36

Luke 5:20-26

Luke 7:1-10

Luke 8:22-25

Luke 9:1-2

The question posed to Jesus was supposed to put him in an embarrassing situation where he would be forced into one of two undesirable answers:

If he admitted that he had no credentials the people could be expected to lose respect for him. On the other hand, if he considered himself authorized to do the things he had been doing, was he not arrogating to himself rights that belonged only to God? (Hendrickson, p .888)

By answering a question with a question, Jesus is not evading the answer. *Jesus' maneuver is not an attempt to dodge the question; it is an attempt to raise the stakes. Counter-questions were common among rabbis.* (Bock Commentary, 2, p. 1586) Jesus is putting his questioners in a position to have to face their own hypocrisy and unwillingness to deal with the answer.

Why does Jesus ask them about John's ministry? Remember how John had testified about Jesus:

Luke 3:15-18

John 1:19-34

Read verses 3-6. What are the two answers that the Jewish leaders are forced to choose between? Why do they not like either option?

Notice how the leaders put themselves in this position! They had failed to respond correctly to John's clear call for repentance. Now their response to Jesus is impacted by the way they had responded to John. With insight, Darrell Bock points out a lesson for us.

One sin tends to result in more sin. This tendency of sin to multiply like a cancerous cell is why turning from sin is so important. It prevents the disease from spreading to even more damaging proportions. (Bock, p. 503)

How have you experienced this in your life? What are some important first stages of your battle against sin that guard you from even greater sin?

In this instance, the religious leaders get it wrong while the non-religious professionals have a better understanding of the truth. As one commentator notes, *Every member, with the help of God's Spirit should make up his own mind. Heresy often begins at the top! An excellent example to follow is that of the Bereans.* (Hendrickson, p. 896)

Read Acts 17:11. What does it mean to you to follow the example of the Bereans? How can you personally do this?

This incident at the temple, rightly understood, should cause us to reevaluate where we stand with Jesus. Here is a man who does radical things. He comes preaching a fulfillment of God's promises in himself. He makes decisive judgments on how God ought to be worshiped. About such a man, we must make a decision.

Perhaps none have made this point so memorably as C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*.

I am trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic- on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg- or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.¹

The teachers of Jesus' day at least recognized this. And yet they would not come clean about where they really stood. How about you? Where are you hesitant to speak up about your beliefs about Jesus? Is it more difficult for you to be honest about your doubts or convictions concerning Jesus?

¹ Lewis, C. S., *Mere Christianity*, London: Collins, 1952, pp. 54-56.

For the religious leaders who question Jesus, at issue is not the truth, but power.¹ They show themselves uninterested in coming to a correct understanding of who Jesus is. They just see him as a threat to their own position of authority. They correctly sense that if they were to acknowledge Jesus' authority from God, there would be implications for their lives!

If you have acknowledged Jesus' authority as coming from God, what have the implications been for you? In what areas of life have you submitted to his direction?

At the beginning of this study, we noted the common questions asked by those who have been offended: *Who do you think you are? What gives you the right?*

Spend some time thinking about these questions: Who do you think Jesus is? What gives him the right to act and speak the way he did? Look up some of the verses below (and any others that come to mind) that speak to who Jesus is. Then offer yourself to him in prayer, worshiping him and submitting yourself to his authority.

Ephesians 1:22-23

Philippians 2:5-11

Colossians 1:15-20

Hebrews 1:1-3

Revelation 22:13

¹ Does any of this sound familiar in this season of presidential campaigning? The quest for popularity and power; the attempt to trip up opponents by attempting to get them to say something they will regret? While the religious leaders are playing politics, though, Jesus is preparing to pay the ultimate price for unequivocally declaring the truth.

Praying the Passage: Luke 20:1-8

- Acknowledge the authority and divinity of Jesus. Consider reading Colossians 1:15-20, and responding to it with praises that begin with “Jesus, you are. . . .”
- Name and consecrate specific areas of your life to God, submitting all things to Jesus’ authority.
- Confess how our intellectual questions, like those of the elders/teachers of the law, can sometimes be a smokescreen for rebellion and pride.
- Probe the implication of Jesus’ authority by reading the great commission in Matthew 28:16-18. Pray for each other by name, that you would be emboldened by Jesus’ authority, and would therefore go where He has called you.
- Pray for those who have yet to acknowledge Jesus’ authority. Pray that genuine questions may be answered and insincere questions may be exposed. Pray that the ultimate result would be repentance and faith. Pray that many would believe in their heart and confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord. Ask God to add to our number daily those that are being saved!

Study Eight: Luke 20:9-18

Falling on the Stone

Jesus told a lot of parables, but the one we are going to look at this week is remarkable. By this parable, Jesus dramatically indicts the religious leaders who have rejected his authority. It is also, as one pastor calls it, a *death parable, his prophetic autobiography* (Hughes, 2, p. 257). As we will see, he also reveals a significant truth about what it means to belong to the people of God.

Read Luke 20:9-18. Make notes as you read this allegorical parable. What do you think the various figures in the story stand for? What is confusing or unclear?

Owner of the vineyard:

Vineyard:

Tenants:

Servants:

Son:

Others to whom the vineyard will be given:



Before going on, try to summarize the point of the parable in one or two sentences.

Luke 20:9

A man planted a vineyard... With the opening of his story, Jesus has everyone's attention. Read the following passages that would undoubtedly have immediately come to the minds of his Jewish audience steeped in the Old Testament.

Psalm 80:8-16

Isaiah 5:1-7

Isaiah 27:2-4

Remember where Jesus is when he is telling this parable. (See Luke 20:1 if you have forgotten.) The listeners would have had a strong visual reminder of this connection between Israel's relationship with God and the image of a vineyard.

The vineyard / Israel connection was so much a part of their national consciousness that the very temple in which Jesus was standing sported a richly carved grapevine, seventy cubits high, sculpted around the door that led from the porch to the Holy Place. The branches, tendrils, and leaves were of finest gold. The bunches of grapes hanging upon the golden limbs were costly jewels. (Hughes, 2, p. 255)

A man... went into another country for a long while. Several of Jesus stories picture God as one who has left and is absent.¹ Do you ever feel like God is nowhere to be found? Theologians speak of the *hiddenness* of God. How do you deal with times when God seems distant?

Verses 10-12 describe the ministry of the prophets sent by God to the people of Israel. What do you think *the fruit* of the vineyard represents which God wanted to receive but was denied?

Read Philippians 1:9-11 and Galatians 5:22-23. What is the fruit that God longs to see in his people today? What does this fruit look like practically in your life? Where are the places that the fruit of righteousness can be shown?

¹ This is not to say that Jesus is teaching that God is actually distant! But sometimes we perceive God to be distant.

What does it say about the owner of the vineyard that he continued to send his servants to the wicked tenants even after they continued to mistreat them? What does this tell us about character of God?

Finally, the owner makes up his mind to send his *beloved son*. This is a deliberate echo of Luke 3:22.

We must not miss the huge distinction that Jesus made between himself and the prophets and the religious leaders. The prophets were servants, but he was the Son. The leaders were tenants, but he was the heir and joint-owner with the Father. (Hughes, 2, p. 257)

The New Testament points again and again to the uniqueness of Jesus as the Son of God. Read the following verses. How would these verses, along with the parable we are looking at, help you explain the uniqueness of Jesus to a friend who comes from a Jewish, Muslim, or other religious background?

John 3:16

Romans 8:32

Hebrews 1:1-5

But when the son arrives, the tenants see an opportunity. Bock writes,

Barring any breach of relationship, it was not unusual for land to pass to tenants if no heirs existed. But the logic of these tenants is skewed. 'If we kill the heir, we will become the heirs!' How will killing the heir reap benefits for them? How twisted sinful thinking can be. Blindness can see strange things in the dark. (Bock, p. 508)

Think for a moment about the skewed logic of sin. What are some examples of how sin tempts us to pursue avenues for pleasure, which in reality lead to dead ends and disaster?

The parable reaches its conclusion, making its point in verse 16. Having foretold his death at the hands of these Jewish leaders, Jesus now predicts what will happen to them. What is this two-fold prediction that so shocks his listeners that they cry out, *God forbid!?*¹

Notice how Paul's audience in Acts 22:21-22 erupts in similar indignation (to say the least) when he speaks of God directing him to go to the Gentiles. But it is this very point that becomes the centerpiece of Paul's message and ministry.

How does what Paul writes in Ephesians 2:11-13, 19-22 relate to this parable we are studying?

To corroborate his message, Jesus finishes by quoting from a psalm. Psalm 118 was associated with the celebration of Passover² and was widely recognized as a messianic psalm – that is, one that spoke of the coming Messiah. It has already been quoted twice in Luke's gospel, once by Jesus and once by the crowds.³

Read Psalm 118:22-24. God is praised for engineering a mighty work of salvation. Most likely the *stone* originally referred to the king as representative of the people of Israel. Apparent defeat has become resounding victory. God has taken that which was rejected and exalted it!

Notice how this quickly becomes central to the early church's proclamation. In Acts 4:8-12, we find Peter being questioned by the same Jewish leaders about his authority (just as Jesus was in Luke 20:1-8). They must have experienced *déjà vu* as they listened to his response!

Finally, in verse 18 Jesus gives a stern warning in words that contain echoes from the prophets.⁴ The meaning is clear: those who reject Jesus and seek his destruction will face devastating consequences!

1 This response could also be translated *May it never be!* It is the same phrase Paul uses in Romans several times. For instance, it's found in Romans 6:1-2 when he rhetorically asks, *Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?*

2 Psalms 113-118 were known as the Egyptian Hallel. The first two psalms were customarily sung before the Passover meal which celebrated the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. The remaining four were sung after the meal.

3 See Luke 13:34-35 and Luke 19:37-40.

4 See Isaiah 8:14-15 and Daniel 2:34-35, 44-45.

So many of the images drawn upon in this parable find expression again and again in the pages of the New Testament. Read the following verses that pick up on the metaphors of the vine, the inheritance, the cornerstone.

John 15:1-5

Galatians 4:4-7

1Peter 2: 4-10

What do these passages teach us about the Christian life? Spend some time in your homegroup encouraging and exhorting one another with these truths!

Praying the Passage: Luke 20:9-18

- Praise God for His mercy and patience displayed in this passage, and His sending of numerous prophets to the nation of Israel. Thank Him for his patience with us, displayed in the years of life we have been given, the abundant access to His word we have, and the freedom of worship we enjoy.
- Repent of ways in which we have participated in the killing of the prophets and Christ. Ponder the notion that it was our sins that put Jesus on the cross. Confess those sins, silently and out loud. Confess not only your sins, but also those of the larger body.
- Pray for God's continued patience with us, that He would not remove our lampstands (Revelation 2:5), but instead be pleased at our earnestness to serve Him.
- Pray for our churches to focus on Jesus as the chief cornerstone, instead of building on some other foundation.
- Pray that our churches would bear much fruit. Be specific about what kind of fruit you ask God for—perhaps a renewed passion for justice, an expanded vision of creation care, laborers who go overseas, different peoples coming to Christ, supernatural generosity, and so on.
- Pray for the nation of Israel that stumbles over Jesus.
- Pray for our friends and family, that they would not stumble over Jesus, but instead embrace Him and submit to Him. Pray for the nations to recognize this capstone!

Study Nine: Luke 20:19-26

God and Caesar

What is the relationship between religion and politics? Between Church and State? It is an old question that has not ceased to produce all kinds of opinions and debate in our day. We see fundamentalists and reformers battling over the issue in Muslim nations. It is a question we deal with here in the United States, too. Is America a Christian nation? How should our faith relate to issues of public policy? These sorts of questions can bring up complex issues. But not to worry! By the end of this study, you'll know just how to vote in the next election!



Read Luke 20:19-26. Since it is a short passage, read it through slowly and thoughtfully a few times. What questions come to mind? What impressions do you have of Jesus and his opponents and their interaction?

You've heard the phrase, *the enemy of my enemy is my friend*. Such is the case with those who come to Jesus. He is met by a group of *scribes* and *chief priests*, or as the other gospels¹ put it, they are from the parties of the Pharisees and Herodians. It is a match made of convenience.

There could hardly be two groups with such opposing outlooks. The Pharisees were nationalistic. They longed for the messianic kingdom and the overthrow of the Romans. The Herodians had sold themselves out to the Romans and served as their well-cared-for stooges. The Pharisees represented conservative Judaism, whereas the Herodians were liberal and syncretistic in their convictions. The Pharisees were (so to speak) right-wingers. The Herodians were left-wingers. The Pharisees represented cautious resistance to Rome, the Herodians wholesale accommodation. But they were cemented together by their mutual hatred for Jesus. The Pharisees hated him because he was disrupting their religious agenda, the Herodians because he threatened their political arrangements. They both wanted him dead. (Hughes, 2, p. 263)

¹ The parallel passages are found in Matthew 22:15-22 and Mark 12:13-17.

In the last study, we looked at a parable Jesus told that was directed straight at his accusers. Now it is their turn to respond. Having tried unsuccessfully, however, at direct engagement (see 20:1-8), they now resort to a tactic that is subtle but insidious.

According to verses 19-21, describe the motivation, method, and intent of Jesus' questioners.

Motivation:

Method:

Intent:

These men who are sent as spies have nothing but smooth words for Jesus, even as they hope to see him destroyed.

Flattery is the reverse mirror image of gossip. Gossip involves saying behind a person's back what you would never say to his face. Flattery is saying to a person's face what you would never say behind his back. (Hughes, 2, p. 264)
Perhaps we view a little flattery as a trifling thing... after all, it sounds nice! But how does God's word view flattery?

Psalms 12:3

Proverbs 26:28

Proverbs 29:5

In essence they are prefacing their question by saying, *We know others might be afraid to deal with such a sticky issue, but you're not afraid of any man. Your only concern is to teach what is right in the sight of God.* Then comes the big question meant to put him on the horns of a dilemma: *Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar or not?*

At issue was whether it was right to pay the poll tax, a tax placed on every adult by the Roman authorities for the right to exist within their empire. It was required to pay this tax with the Roman coin, a denarius, which bore the image of the emperor and carried the following inscriptions on either side:

Tiberias Caesar Augustus, son of the divine Augustus
High Priest

What is the danger of answering, *No, you shouldn't pay it?*

What is the danger of answering, *Yes, you should pay it?*

It was indeed a loaded question! During Jesus' youth (6AD), a man known as Judas of Galilee had sparked a violent uprising because of this very issue. The famous first century Jewish historian Josephus records,

There was one Judas, a Galilean, of a city whose name was Gamala, who, taking with him Zadok, a Pharisee, became zealous to draw them to a revolt. Both said that this taxation was no better than an introduction to slavery, and exhorted the nation to assert their liberty. (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 18:4)

Out of this grew the Zealot movement whose slogan, *We have no Lord but only God*, was at once both a religious and political statement. Ultimately this resulted in the razing of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70AD.

But Jesus responded differently. He asks, *Whose likeness and inscription does it have?* The answer was obvious-Caesar's. Then the brilliant reply, *Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.*

Is this a classic argument for the separation of church and state? How would you respond to someone who uses this verse to argue that God has no place in secular life and the state has no place in religion?

The coin bears Caesar's image. It is his. What is it that bears God's image and likeness? Read the following verses. What are we to give him?

Genesis 1:26-27

Colossians 3:5-17

What does it look like to have the name of the Lord Jesus inscribed on everything you do? Give some practical examples from your everyday life.

Read the following verses. What is the relationship of the kingdom (rule or reign) of God and the governments that rule here and now?

Matthew 6:10

John 18:36

John 19:9-16

In light of the verses below, how would you briefly summarize a Christian's obligation to the governing authorities?

Romans 13:1-7

Acts 5:29

1Peter 2:13-17

What are some specific ways you as a citizen of this particular city, state, and country are called to *render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's*?

Built into the American political system is a freedom to voice opposition to political agendas we don't think are in the best interests of the people. How can we honor the governing authorities even when we may disagree with its policies?

Jesus' response left no room for an accusation of disloyalty to Caesar, but also stressed loyalty to God. Jesus is saying that we are citizens of heaven and earth at the same time. . . . It means we can neglect neither loyalty. (Morris, p. 306)

Write a letter or email to one of our elected officials thanking them for their service and letting them know you have prayed for them.¹ (And make sure you've prayed for them!)

Praying the Passage: Luke 20:19-26

- Thank God for both the example and teaching of Jesus, who taught us how to live in this world.
- Dallas Willard writes, *Jesus wasn't just nice. . . . He was brilliant.* Praise God that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3), and that He has answers to silence all the questions of the enemy (Luke 20:26)!
- Praise God that, as we are connected to Christ, we will escape the schemes of the evil one against us, just as Jesus escaped the scheming of the chief priests and teachers of the law.
- Repent of any ways that we, or the church at large, have dishonored our government, failed to obey laws, or pay taxes, or tainted the name of Christ through failing to "render unto Caesar what is Caesar's."
- Pray for ours to be a church that obeys the laws of the land. Pray for repentance among tax-evaders or others who have taken laws lightly. Ask that the American church may be above reproach, as we act respectfully toward our governmental leaders, even as we may disagree with them.
- Pray for each of your homegroup members to have the brilliance of Jesus, as they respond to the questioning of those around them. Pray for protection from the schemes of the enemy.
- Pray for our elected officials to have hearts and minds illumined by Christ!
- Pray for the persecuted church to have great wisdom and courage as they relate to hostile governments. Pray that they be faithful to God and above reproach.

¹ For a list of city, county, and state representatives with their contact information, go to <http://coast-santabarbara.org/elected-officials-in-santa-barbara-county/>

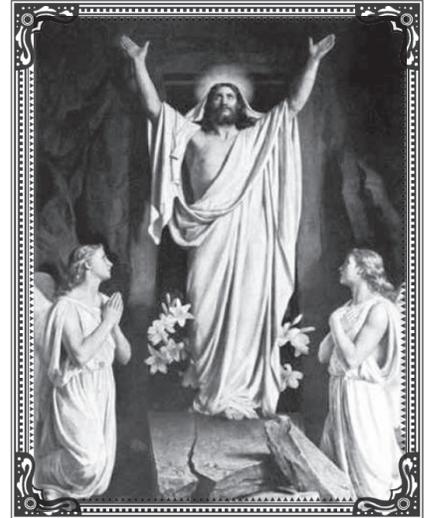
Study Ten: Luke 20:27-40

Marriage and the Resurrection

In many ways, Jesus' ministry in 1st century Israel bore great resemblance to a modern-day presidential campaign. His "platform" was constantly under attack by those already entrenched in the existing power structures. Each word he said was scrutinized by both devotees and detractors. His every controversial move—from his choice of dinner guests, the city of his upbringing, even his potentially scandalous entrance into the world—provided further kindling for a fire storm of negative attention. And, just imagine the groundswell if the Pharisees could have harnessed the power of social media! (@PhariseePhil – things r getting crazy in Jeru, RT: @jesus_christ - tear down this temple, and I will rebuild it in 3 days #notwhatyouthinkitmeans)

In this passage, the attacks continue and a new group is added to the mix.

Read Luke 20:27-40. Write down any questions that arise or anything that surprises you as you read.



For the entirety of chapter 20, Jesus has been in the temple, with his authority on various subjects in question. Here, a new foe joins the fray—the Sadducees.

Although we may be tempted to lump all of the religious leaders of the 1st century together, the Sadducees were distinct from the more well-known Pharisees, and had their own points of emphasis and concern. Darrell Bock sheds further light on this group:

The group seems to have emerged in the second century BC. The Sadducees were priestly and lay aristocrats who revered only the Torah.¹ They were somewhat rationalistic, tended to be wealthy, rejected oral tradition, and desired to preserve the status quo. . . . They were the most religiously conservative group of their day. (Bock Commentary, 2, p. 1616)

¹ The term *Torah* refers to the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Based upon that description, in what ways would the Sadducees have been opponents of Jesus?

Luke 20:27

Luke calls the Sadducees *those who deny that there is a resurrection*. Knowing this, what would have been their motivation in asking the question that follows?

Luke 20:28-33

The Sadducees create a scenario based on the custom of levirate marriage. The practice of levirate marriage is illustrated in Ruth 4, but is most clearly articulated in Deuteronomy 25:5-6. Read the Deuteronomy text. What was the goal of levirate marriage?

Luke 20:34-36

Jesus begins his response by addressing the topic of marriage in the age to come. How would you summarize his response in this section?

As part of his answer to the scenario concerning the perennial widow, Jesus mentions the abolition of death in the age to come. How does the absence of death do away with the necessity of levirate marriage?

Jesus' comments about marriage may be unsettling, but keep in mind the purpose of levirate marriage: to provide sons for the preservation of the family line. Such is not the priority in the age to come. Rather, the age to come will be populated not with new offspring, but with those who are *sons of the resurrection*. Those who attain to the glories of the age to come will be unconcerned with marriage and remarriage in order to preserve a family name. Rather, the concern of those who are *sons of God*, will be the glorification of God's name.

Luke 20:37-38

Jesus' response turns to the heart of the matter in question. He is less concerned about the Sadducees' misunderstanding of marriage in the age to come than their denial of the resurrection, and he uses this opportunity to address the greater concern.

In Exodus 3:6, God identifies himself to Moses as, *the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*. Follow Jesus' line of reasoning in Luke 20:37-38 carefully. How does this demonstrate that Moses believed in the resurrection?

In light of what we've learned about the Sadducees, how does Jesus' response place them in a difficult situation?

Luke 20:39-40

The scribes were yet another group among the leadership of 1st century Israel. They express approval of Jesus' answer (or, at the very least, his argumentation). Why do you think nobody dared to ask Jesus any further questions? Was it out of reverence, out of respect, out of fear, or for another reason?

The particulars of Jesus' conversation with the Sadducees are centuries removed from our time and place, but the general tone of the interaction may sound familiar. After all, skeptics still desire to undermine core tenets of Christian hope and belief. What are some doctrines or beliefs of the faith that are met with skepticism by 21st century Americans?

What can we learn from Jesus' conversation with the Sadducees that would better equip us for such conversations? How would you respond if asked about the disputed doctrines you listed above?

Disbelief in the resurrection also crept into the church at Corinth. In 1Corinthians 15:12-26, Paul addresses their error. Outline Paul's argument in this passage.

The resurrection of our bodies is a central doctrine in Christian belief, and appears throughout the Scriptures (see, for example, Daniel 12:2, Acts 4:1-2, Hebrews 6:1-2, and Revelation 20:12-15). As 1Corinthians 15 makes clear, though, the resurrection of our bodies is also the ground for real hope. How does the promise of the resurrection encourage you?

Read 1Corinthians 15:50-57 out loud with your homegroup. Spend some time in prayer and worship, celebrating the hope of the resurrection.

Praying the Passage: Luke 20:27-40

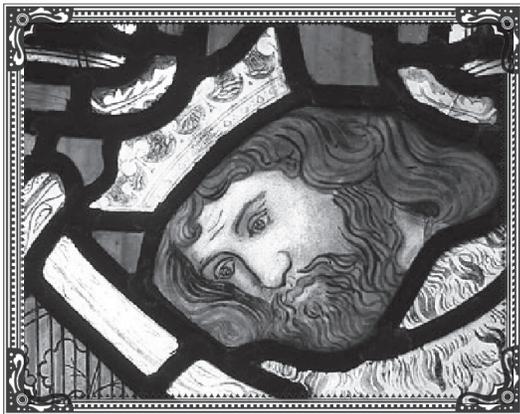
- Read 1Corinthians 15:50-57 if you haven't already. Praise God for the resurrection of the body, and for Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life!
- Celebrate the resurrection by remembering those who have died but are still alive! Start with the Biblical figures we will meet one day, like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses (Luke 20:37), move on to believers through history, and then remember people we have known and worshipped with. Praise God that He is not the God of the dead but of the living!
- Repent of any ways in which our lives reflect a practical denial of the resurrection, reflected in a focus on making the most of this world rather than storing up treasures in the next, or perhaps in grieving without hope.
- Pray for those who have lost loved ones, that they may hope in the resurrection.
- Pray against the materialism and unbelief of our culture, against a philosophy that says *you only go around once, or Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die*. Pray for friends and family who have no hope in the resurrection, that they may meet Him who is the resurrection and the life!

Study Eleven: Luke 20:41-44

The Son of David and David's Lord

Jesus has made his way to Jerusalem, the city of his destiny (Luke 9:51). During his time in the city, he is met with opposition at every turn. He has spent the balance of chapter 20 boldly and convincingly answering various challenges to his authority.

With all of his examiners now silenced (20:40), Jesus takes up the role of questioner. Read Luke 20:41-44. As you read this brief text, make a note of any questions or insights you may have.



Luke 20:41

The referent of *them* is not specified, but it is likely that Jesus addresses the following section to the gathered crowd of religious leaders. Those who had been so quick to question his authority are now, themselves, questioned. And Jesus' first inquiry has to do with the identity of the Messiah.

The term *Christ* is the Greek version of the Hebrew term *Messiah*. The Messiah was the long-awaited one who, it was hoped, would restore the fortunes of the nation and rule over the people of Israel. Although this expectation took many forms, the hope and anticipation of the Christ was as real in the 1st century as at any time.

Jesus' rhetorical questioning turns on three things: the Christ as the Son of David, the Christ as David's Lord, and the customary patriarchal family structure in 1st century Israel.

The Son of David

The expectation that the Messiah would be a descendant—and, thus, a “son”—of David, arose from numerous Old Testament texts. Read the following passages and make a note of the character and activity of the promised Son of David.

2 Samuel 7:8-16

Isaiah 9:5-7

Jeremiah 23:5-6

At various times in his life and ministry, Jesus had been identified as the Son of David. Read each of the following passages that references Jesus as the Son of David. How do these passages align with the expectations of the Son of David as outlined in the Old Testament passages above?

Luke 1:26-33

Matthew 12:22-23

Mark 10:46-52

Matthew 21:7-11

David's Lord: Luke 20:42-43

Jesus' assertion that the Messiah was the Son of David would likely have met with little resistance among the crowd of religious leaders. Yet, the question that he pulls out of Psalm 110 would have caused some discomfort among his listeners.

Jesus quotes the opening verse of Psalm 110. The rich imagery of this psalm is quoted more often than any other by the various authors of the New Testament. What themes emerge from the verse that Jesus quotes?

Because our English text reads, *The Lord said to my Lord*, we might see the two uses of the word *Lord* as parallel. In the original Hebrew version of Psalm 110:1, however, two different terms are used. The first, *Yahweh*, was the covenant name of the Father. The second, *adonai*, was a more common term for *lord*. What difference does this distinction make in helping to understand what's at play in the verse that Jesus quotes? How does David see himself fitting into this picture?

The imagery of sitting at the right hand and enemies being made footstools speaks of one in authority, as the title *Lord* implies. This one is *Lord* not only in name, but in function, in power, and in position.

How did you come to understand Jesus, not just as a significant figure, good teacher, or good example, but as Lord?

Patriarchal Family Systems (Luke 20:44)

David is celebrating one who is both his descendant and his superior! This might not make us think twice, but for the original audience, such a situation was unthinkable.

In the contemporary West, the lines of family hierarchy are blurry. A daughter can take over the family business while her parents are still living. The head football coach at USC can hire his father to report to him.

Yet, in 1st century Israel, such arrangements would have been unheard of. Darrell Bock clarifies,

The cultural assumption in the question is the respect accorded a patriarch in that society. A father normally did not bow to a son. So the dilemma in the question is why David shows this figure such total respect and submits to him if he is his son rather than his ancestor (Bock, p. 523).

Using his listeners' own assumption about the Christ—that he would be the Son of David—and David's own words, Jesus is forcing his audience to the conclusion that there is something even more significant about the Christ than his Davidic lineage. What is it?

The Christ was not merely a descendant of David, as so many others had been. He was David's Lord, the One given the authority and power that comes with sitting at the right hand of the Father. Notice that there is no response given to the question in verse 44, either by Jesus or by the leaders. What, then, is the proper response to such a person? With what decision is Jesus leaving the religious leaders?

The troubling thing about Jesus' interaction with the religious leaders is that their thinking and understanding of the Scriptures on this issue was very likely orthodox, yet their practice was anything but that, as revealed in their unwillingness to submit to the Lordship of Jesus. We face the same dilemma. We can have all the right information about Jesus, but still never have submitted to his rule and authority in our lives. How does Jesus' lordship affect your worship? Your daily habits? Your work or study life? Your interactions with family and friends?

How can your homegroup encourage you as you seek to honor Jesus, the Lord, with your life?

Praying the Passage: Luke 20:41-44

- Take a moment of silence and ponder the mystery and miracle of the incarnation, that God became a man through the line of David, and yet remains the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who will rule over his enemies (Psalm 110:1) and judge the nations (Psalm 110:6). Praise God for this miracle. Among the gods, there is none like Him (Psalm 86:8)!
- Praise God for the trustworthiness and fulfillment of scripture. Praise Him for all that is written about Jesus in the Psalms. Consider speaking some of these Messianic Psalms to each other. A few examples are:

Psalm 2:7-12

Psalm 22

Psalm 24:7-8

Psalm 31:5

Psalm 34:19-20

Psalm 45

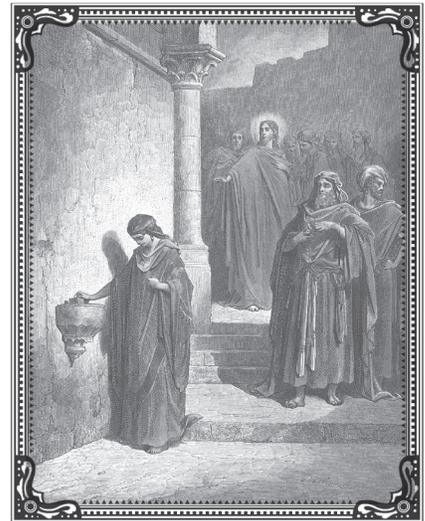
- Pray for each of your homegroup members, that you may know David's Son and David's Lord better in the specific situations of your lives. Pray you may submit to Him in all things, as you fill your minds with the scriptures about Him.
- Pray for the nation of Israel to recognize David's Son and David's Lord! Pray that many Jews may come to Christ, and that synagogues may become Christ-worshipping congregations as they search the scriptures concerning the Messiah.

Study Twelve: Luke 20:45-21:4

Devouring Widows

Leaders live their lives both on a pedestal and under a microscope. For many leaders, religious and otherwise, the pedestal is far more welcome than the microscope. Religious leaders, in particular, may be showered with attention, praise, and support from appreciative church members. But, when those in leadership forget about the microscope, the pedestal becomes nothing more than a precarious height from which to fall.

In the passage that follows, Jesus confronts a group of religious leaders that had embraced the pedestal while ignoring the microscope, and his words to them are sharp. Read Luke 20:45-47. What is curious, notable, or confusing about Jesus' assessment of the scribes?



The scribes were another group within 1st century Jewish leadership. The primary role of the scribes had to do with the Law. The scribes applied the general instructions of the Torah to daily living and even extended the Law to theoretical situations to build a safety fence against inadvertent breaches.¹ Additional scribal responsibilities included teaching the Law, providing judgments in the community, and preserving the sacred texts.

Luke 20:45

To whom is Jesus speaking in these verses? How is that significant, given what has taken place in the rest of chapter 20?

¹ G. H. Twelftree, "Scribes," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), p. 733.

Luke 20:46-47

Although they had previously agreed with Jesus on the issue of the resurrection (20:39), the scribes are on the receiving end of a harsh rebuke from the Son of Man. Make a note of each of his criticisms (you should be able to find six).

Look closely at Jesus' description of the behavior of the scribes. What seems to be at the heart of their actions?

Luke 20:46

Each of the four criticisms that Jesus offers in this verse had to do with the trappings of power and authority. We may not parade around in long robes or seek special seating in a Sunday worship service, but the temptation to covet the perks of position are no less real for us. What are some of the exterior displays of significance that you are tempted to pursue, whether at work, at school, in your family, or among your peers? How do those things hinder your discipleship?

Luke 20:47

In this verse, Jesus offers his fiercest rebuke of the scribes and points to actions that reveal their unworthiness to be spiritual leaders of the people. First, they *devour widows*. The precise meaning of this phrase is unclear,¹ but the obvious conclusion is that the scribes, who loved attention and the privileges of power, paid no attention to the plight of the powerless.

Further, they *for a pretense make long prayers*. Such ostentatious displays of piety—coupled with the robes, greetings and choice seating arrangement of verse 46—rang hollow in light of their reprehensible treatment of the weakest members of society.

¹ Bock lists four possibilities: (1) *the temple authorities managed the property of widows dedicated to the temple in a way that took advantage of them*, (2) *the scribes took advantage of widows' hospitality*, (3) *the scribes took homes as pledges of debts they knew could not be repaid*, or (4) *they took fees for legal advice against the provisions of the law*. (Bock Commentary 2, p. 1643)

Considering all of these things, why would Jesus say, *They will receive the greater condemnation*? What do we know about Jesus and his ongoing battles with the religious authorities that would cause him to offer such a warning?

Now the story turns from Jesus' verbal rebuke of the scribes to a live illustration of their shortcomings. Read Luke 21:1-4, making a note of anything that stands out to you.

The connection of this story to what precedes it may not be immediately evident. After all, it's not as if the scribes are contrasted with the widow in this account of giving at the temple. But, the scribes are not yet off the hook with Jesus.

The issue at hand is how one seeks or gains attention. On the one hand, there are the scribes who, by their hypocrisy, seek the attention of the people. On the other hand, there is the impoverished but sacrificial widow, who would have gained little attention from the people, but much from God.

Luke 21:2

The widow brings a miniscule gift, *two small copper coins*. The Greek term used here for *copper coins* is *lepta*. According to Darrell Bock, *Lepta were small copper coins, the smallest currency available, whose value was one-eighth of a penny* (Bock Commentary 2, p. 1645). And, Jesus points out, this was all she had (v. 4)! How, then, can Jesus claim that she had *put in more than all of the rich* who obviously had so much more to offer?

Luke 21:3-4

Jesus, notably, doesn't condemn the offering of the rich, rather he contrasts it with the widow's. What principles can we draw out of this event, then, to understand God's perspective on giving, whether we are rich or poor?

How does the example of the widow challenge or encourage you in your practices of giving?

The scribes, who were sometimes—but not always—wealthy, would have been shamed by the praise given to the widow, since their prospects in life were likely better than hers. In an ironic twist, the scribes are devoured by the widow's actions. Those who devoured the weakest members of the society, yet sought the approval of men, are shown to fall far short of the approval of God by the example of the very one they would have exploited!

Although the scribes receive the condemnation in these verses, we must not forget that the teachings of each section are directed to Jesus' disciples as warnings (vv. 45-46). As disciples of Jesus, we are included in that group. What is the specific warning for you to take away from this passage? Share your conclusion with your homegroup so that they can pray for you as seek to live like the widow rather than the scribes.

Praying the Passage: Luke 20:45 - 21:4

- Tell God that He is the only one worthy of being exalted. Tell Him we do not fear or revere men or Christian celebrities, but we worship only Him.
- Recognize that we are every bit as impoverished as the widow in this story. Acknowledge that He who created the universe does not need our gifts. Praise Him that He accepts and multiplies our meager offerings!
- Repent of any other pharisaical pride among us. Do this silently or out loud, as appropriate. Pray for those who teach and preach among us, and others who have a public ministry, that pride would not be a snare to them (Luke 20:46-47). Pray that they would seek and receive the approval of their Father in heaven instead of the approval of men.
- Pray for our churches, other churches, and other Christian groups in the business of raising money and receiving offerings. Pray that we would not be guilty of accepting the worldly elevation of big donors.
- Ask that God would receive and multiply our gifts and offerings. Pray for increased faith and increased giving among us. Pray that our giving and church budget would be a fragrant offering and pleasing incense to God.
- Ask God to bless the generosity of poor believers all over the world. Think of our brothers and sisters in Africa, Venezuela, or Honduras, as just a few examples. Ask that God may multiply their giving and encourage them that He is greatly pleased with their gifts. Pray that God would enlarge their "store of seed" and give them the ability to be generous on every occasion (2Corinthians 9:10-11).

Study Thirteen: Luke 21:5-38

About the Future

If you hold a *prophecy conference*, or write a book about the *end times*, if you are so bold as to set a date with regard to the return of Jesus, or say something like, *What is happening in* (insert most recent Middle-Eastern nation to be in the news) *was predicted in Bible prophecy!!!!* . . . well, in the United States you are likely to become well-liked, famous or even wealthy. The American church has, for the better part of a century, devoured literature, lectures and endless speculation about the end times.



But such end-times speculation is not unique to our time and place. *Messiah forecasting* was big business in the era of Jesus much as it is in our own. The Sadducees and the Pharisees, the priests and the people, were no strangers to speculating on the future. The *experts* were reading *the signs of the times* and making their predictions. Consequently, they built up a good deal of folklore concerning what must happen before Messiah comes.

One of the last things Jesus did before his ordeal in Jerusalem was to prepare his disciples for the future. Each of the first three Gospels contains a teaching from the mouth of Jesus given from the Mount of Olives, adjacent to and 150 feet above the temple area of the City of David.¹ Our passage contains Luke's version of Jesus' *Olivet discourse*.

Before going on in this study, read this brief sermon by Jesus. Use the following headings to help you make sense of the flow of Jesus' thought. Write a sentence describing each heading (For example: What is the unlikely prediction in 21:5ff.) If you do no more than this part of this study you will have a firm grip on the teaching of Jesus regarding the future.

As you read Luke 21:5-38, try to dismiss everything you *know* about the end-times. You are a disciple, perplexed about what is happening, distraught about how Jesus is talking (consider John 14-17), and fearful about what the rest of the evening holds. Jesus draws attention to the beautiful temple of Jerusalem and begins his teaching. What do you hear?

An unlikely prediction (21:5-7)

A warning about date setters (21:8-9)

A promise of persecution (21:10-19)

¹ See Matthew 24 and Mark 13.

- The judgment of Jerusalem (21:20-24)
- The judgment of the whole world (21:25-28)
- A living parable (21:29-33)
- The practical application (21:34-36)

Now let us dig a little deeper into this sermon by Jesus. Books have been written about this short sermon and the content of Jesus' words is subject to much scholarly debate. Kent Hughes points out,

This [debate] is because of the rich nature of the prophetic language that Jesus used (virtually every verse has multiple allusions to both the Old Testament and to other Jewish apocalyptic literature), and because of the nature of prophecy itself—multiple fulfillments culminating in a final fulfillment. (Hughes, 2, p. 295)

An Unlikely Prediction (21:5-7)

We looked at the temple in study 6. You may want to review what we saw there. In addition to that, we should note the enormous size of the stones used to build the temple and the exquisite beauty of the temple compound. Josephus wrote,

The exterior of the building wanted nothing that could astound either mind or eye. Remember the massive plates of gold, the sun was no sooner up that it radiated so fiery a flash that persons straining to look at it were compelled to avert their eyes, as from the solar rays. To approaching strangers it appeared from a distance like a snow-clad mountain; for all that was not overlaid with gold was of purest white. . . . Some of the stones in the building were forty-five cubits in length, five in height and six in breadth.¹

Think of the audacity of Jesus to make such a prediction. Yet, that is precisely what happened in 70AD. Not surprisingly, the temple has not been rebuilt for two millennia!

How should this prediction which Jesus made inform our confidence in the second coming of Jesus?

A Warning About Date Setters (21:8-9)

History is not devoid of false teachers who make a name for themselves foretelling the date of Jesus' second coming (Harold Camping is the most recent example when he predicted, with a world-wide advertising campaign, that Jesus would come back on May 21, 2011, and then again on October 21, 2011.)

¹ Cited in Hughes, 2, p. 296.

What is Jesus' concern about date setters and our response to them? Why do you think we are so enamored of Bible teachers who predict the future?

Read and respond to the following quotation very carefully.

Jesus discourages a 'countdown' interpretation of prophecy, by which current events can be plotted in sequence to show how far we have yet to go to judgment day. Like those who saw Jerusalem besieged, those who see the Son of man coming in glory will know that judgment is not simply on its way, but has actually arrived. These, and these only, are the end-signs. All other signs indicate, not the end we look towards, but the age we live in. Periodically throughout the time between Jesus's first and second comings there will be upheavals in the world at large (21:8-11), and persecution for the church (21:12-19). The disciples are told 'to reject the usual apocalyptic interpretation of political distress. It is a sign of the age, not of the end.' 'This will be a time for you', not to calculate the nearness of the Lord's return, but 'to bear testimony' (21:13). (Wilcock, pp. 187-188)

A Promise Of Persecution (21:10-19)

What are Jesus' specific promises to his future church with regard to persecution?

What verses or phrases in this section speak to you personally? Why?

The Judgment of Jerusalem (21:20-24)

In verse 20, Jesus does give a sign of the imminent destruction of Jerusalem. What is it?

1 The citation within this quotation is from E. Earle Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke*, 1966, p. 247.

The Judgment Of The Whole World (21:25-28)

Notice how easily Jesus allows his prediction of the fall of Jerusalem to morph into a prediction of the end of the world. He moves from *Jerusalem* in verse 20 to the *distress of the nations* in verse 25.

What is Jesus predicting in verses 25-27?

Read verse 28 carefully. What is Jesus' promise to those living shortly before the second coming of Jesus?

A Living Parable (21:29-33)

This parable has perplexed many because it sounds like Jesus expected his second coming to take place in the immediate near-future by his inclusion of the words, *this generation will not pass away until all has taken place* (21:32).

Gundry explains:

Ancient Jews spoke of only two seasons, winter and summer (Psalm 74:17). So the sprouting of leaves on trees indicated that the early part of summer, what we call late spring, was near. The addition of "already" both to "sprouted" and to "near" advances the nearness: *very near*. "God's reign is near" (21:31) substitutes for "your redemption is drawing near" (21:28) and thereby indicates that the coming of the Son of Man to redeem his disciples will mark the coming of God's reign on earth, for which reign Jesus taught them to pray (11:2). God's reign was present in the ministry of Jesus (17:21), but the complete takeover of the world awaits the second coming. Jesus gives the firmest possible assurance of nearness. At first glance "this generation" looks like a reference to his contemporaries. . . . But the parable of the fig tree and other trees defines "this generation" as those living during the period of heavenly signs and earthly distress. (Gundry, p. 326)

The Practical Application (21:34-36)

These verses are the most important of Jesus sermon. What is Jesus saying to his followers? What is his message to us?

Jesus gives several warnings to the listener. What are they?

In verse 36, Jesus gives us a few directives. How are we to respond to his teaching? Spend time doing this as a homegroup.

C. S. Lewis had an essay published in *Decision* magazine one month before his death. In it, he spoke of the necessity of being ready for the return of our Lord.

The world might stop in ten minutes; meanwhile, we are to go on doing our duty. The great thing is to be found at one's post as a child of God, living each day as though it were our last, but planning as though the world might last a hundred years.

Praying the Passage: Luke 21:5-38

- Give thanks for, and rest in, the sovereignty of God, that He is in control of all of history, and that no natural disasters, wars, or revolutions are outside His knowledge or control.
- Give thanks to God that He will give us wisdom and words when we need them (21:15), and not a hair of our heads will perish (21:18). Expand your prayers to thank God for the security He provides in a turbulent and uncertain world. Name things we need not fear because we belong to Him.
- Thank God for the eternal altar in heaven, at which we will worship forever, even as earthly temples and institutions will pass away (21:6).
- Thank God for the warnings and prophecies here, from the mouth of Jesus, giving us a picture of what is to come. We are privileged to have the Bible in English!
- Pray for each other that your faith may endure opposition (21:16-17), and that you may escape all that is about to happen (21:36), as God is gracious to you.
- Pray for each other to be self-controlled, alert, and at prayer (2 Peter 3:12), so that you will not be weighed down with dissipations, drunkenness, and the anxieties of life, or surprised by *that Day* (21:34).
- Pray for our friends and family, that they too would know and be anchored in Christ when He returns.

Study Fourteen: Luke 22:1-6

Treachery

Shortly after the time of Christ, the popularity of the baby name *Judas* probably tanked. Everyone knows the name. Sometimes used as a descriptor (*He was a complete Judas*), the very sound of this name connotes treachery and betrayal. And yet, here was a man who was included in Jesus' most intimate circle. As one of the twelve disciples, Judas ate with, traveled with, and was a first-hand witness to, the person and ministry of Jesus. As 17th century British clergyman Thomas Goodwin once said, *Judas heard all Christ's sermons*. Then, what happened? How could one so close to the work of Jesus slide into such darkness and evil?

Read Luke 22:1-6 with the following in mind:

What is the setting? What is about to be celebrated?

Who are the players in this six-verse drama?

What is the basis for their collaboration?

Now, compare Luke's account with the other gospel accounts. Read Matthew 26:14-16, Mark 14:43-45, and John 13:21-30.¹ What similarities do you find? Differences?

At this point in Jesus' ministry, people are flocking to him. Everywhere he goes he seems to draw a crowd. For the chief priests and scribes, this presents an obvious problem: How do you get rid of someone with such popularity? If they were to kill Jesus, there would be public backlash and upheaval. As religious leaders, they would come off looking quite bad. Along comes the solution to their problem: Judas. What Judas offers the Jewish leaders is basically an "inside job"—information as to Jesus' whereabouts and activities, as well as incrimination from his inner circle.

¹ You might want to read these verses aloud as you meet in your homegroup.

What do you think motivated Judas to betray Jesus?

We learn that Judas accepted a sum of money for this offer of betrayal. To be exact (from the Matthew account), we know he received *thirty pieces of silver*. Was that his motivation? Money? In the Old Testament, this sum would have been the penalty paid by the owner of an ox that gored a slave to death (see Exodus 21:32). It would have been equivalent to about 4 months of a laborer's wage and generally considered a meager sum. In short, the amount paid for this act of treachery was close to an insult.

In the end, we can only offer guesses as to why Judas would commit such an act. What we do know is simple, stark, and sobering. Verse 3 says, *Then Satan entered into Judas, called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve.*

How do you read and interpret this verse?

Do you think that Satan's *entering* Judas was a sudden event? Why or why not?

Do you think Jesus knew all along that Judas would become a traitor? Find a verse or two, from any of the four gospels, that supports your viewpoint.

What about Judas' salvation? Did he lose it? Did he never have it?

For us as believers in Christ, a clear understanding of the above question is critical. Read 1Peter 2:4-10. List the assurances in these verses. List any conditions you find. How does this help your understanding of the security of your salvation?

Throughout the Bible, we are given an image of faith in Christ in terms of building, or an immovable foundation. Read the following¹:

So this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed." (Isaiah 28:16)

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. (Matthew 7:24)

Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness." (2 Timothy 2:19)

In short, when we place our faith in Jesus Christ as our savior, we are proclaiming that we choose to stand on him as our foundation², and we are figuratively *built into* a house that is eternal and secure. Judas never stood on that same foundation. How can we say this? We know because we have another example of betrayal from among the chosen twelve, and it is the betrayal of Peter, who denied Jesus three times. We will be studying more about that later, but suffice it to say the outcome was much different. Jesus knows our hearts. He knew that Judas' betrayal was fixed and eternal, based on a heart not surrendered to God; he also knew that Peter's betrayal was the sin of a man whose heart had been changed by God, but whose spiritual life was still immature and untested.

The story of Judas and his betrayal of Jesus is, in the end, about much more than a man named Judas and the evil thing he did. It is about a cosmic struggle that began at the very birth of Christ. The drama being played out around the Passover table, was being played out with ferocity in the heavenly realms. Interestingly, Satan is mentioned by name only twice in the gospel of Luke—in the account of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness, and right here, as he enters Judas. Satan begins with enticement in the wilderness, and progresses to vengeance as Jesus resolutely progresses towards his goal at the cross.

As Satan's agent, Judas was resolute, and continued to plot out the execution of his plan. Verse 6 tells us that he *watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.*

¹ All from the NIV.

² The alternative, of course, would be choosing to stand on a variety of God-substitutes that offer temporary satisfaction only, and ultimately crumble beneath us.

Among the four gospels, only Luke mentions that Judas sought to avoid the crowds. Why do you think this would be so? Go ahead and speculate.

Jesus knew. He knew in advance that Judas would betray him. And yet, even as this treachery is revealed as imminent, Jesus does the unimaginable. Read John 13:2-5.

The scene is poignant. The mercy of our heavenly Father is acted out through Jesus up to the very last. Judas could have repented at any moment. He could have turned from his plan and embraced forgiveness. Sadly, he didn't. The gospel of Luke doesn't tell us about how Judas' tragic life ended.¹ We also never find out what specific motives drove him, but we do know this: that his sin is common to all men and women. This particular sin is the very one introduced to Adam and Eve in the garden—that we can be like God. Judas preferred to control his own destiny, rather than entrust his life to the plans of God. In short, Judas' physical proximity to Jesus didn't bring him true faith. In the same way, our church and Bible-study attendance doesn't guarantee a personal, surrendered relationship with Christ.

How is it with you? Have you entrusted your whole life to God's loving authority? If not, confess that truth and pray that the truth of his mercy and grace would be known to you, and that Christ would reign in your life.

If you have given your life to Christ, think about those specific areas of your life, still not submitted to Him, which you try to steer and control. Confess these, and pray that God's mercy and grace would help you to relinquish these things to God's care.

Lastly, celebrate! We worship a God whose grace covers the worst of our sins, and allows for second chances.

¹ The accounts of Judas' death differ in Scripture. If you're curious, read Matthew 27:3-5 and Acts 1:16-25.

Praying the Passage: Luke 22:1-6

- Praise God for His suffering and condescension, allowing Himself to be betrayed for a few pieces of silver.
- Praise the God who is patient with His enemies, even washing their feet, as in John 13:1-17.
- Recognize that our enemy, the devil, prowls around like a lion, seeking whom He may devour (1Peter 5:8). Confess those areas where you know you are vulnerable to the schemes of the enemy. Confess places you have fallen, and thank Him for His cleansing.
- Pray for the children and youth growing up in our body, that they may not be in mere proximity to Jesus, but in genuine relationship with Him. Pray for those who have wandered from the faith as they have grown into adulthood.
- Pray for each other to be *delivered from evil and led not into temptation*. Pray protection over each homegroup member. Consider reading Ephesians 6:10-18 to help you in this.
- Conclude by praising God that He took what was intended for evil—betrayal and crucifixion—and used it to accomplish the redemption of the world!

Study Fifteen: Luke 22:7-20

A Final Meal



Did you know the typical American family spends more money on fast-food than on education? We also spend vastly more time driving to activities than gathering together around the dinner table. For these reasons it may be difficult for us to truly understand the Middle-Eastern mindset of the intimacy and significance of sharing a meal with others. It was over a meal that business deals were sealed, relationships were formed, and commitments were made. In our study this week, we will take a look at what may be history's most significant meal, the final Passover meal Jesus shared with his disciples.

Read Luke 22:7-20

What are the preparations Jesus asked the disciples to make?

It is curious that Jesus sends the disciples off with such minimal—and somewhat cryptic—information. They are clearly on a mission to find a location pre-planned by Jesus, probably for its privacy. His foreknowledge of the details is revealed in his statement that, upon entering the city, the disciples will be met by *a man carrying a jar of water*.¹

Read Matthew 26:18. How does this differ from Luke 22:10-11?

During Passover, people flocked to the city of Jerusalem for the celebration of the feast. Peter and John would have been among thousands trying to secure a place for this meal. Once the disciples found the locale *just as Jesus told them*, Jesus and his apostles came and reclined at the table.

Jesus said, *I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer* (v. 15). The translation of *eagerly desired* is more emphatic than our English transmits. It means literally *with desire I have desired*. Jesus has longed for this moment.

¹ Although this seems an innocuous detail, it would have probably stood out to the disciples because men didn't customarily carry water. It was women's work. When men did carry water, it was in a smaller leather pouch, never in a jar.

In verses 15-20, Jesus gives information and instructions. Jot down what you find:

Information

Instruction

As you read further keep in the mind three components of the traditional Passover meal: it was a reenactment of that first exodus from slavery; it was a call to remember God's goodness, and to rejoice in it. Pay attention to how these three things are all given new meaning through Christ.

Reenact

The message Jesus is giving to his disciples is deeply embedded in the traditional Passover meal. This meal consisted of symbolic foods and prayers. Read Exodus 12 in order to understand the context of this meal. What details strike you for the first time?

What parallels do you find in our Luke text?

More specifically, what was being reenacted this first Passover?

The Jewish Passover meal came in four courses. The bread to which Jesus refers was part of the third course of the meal, and it symbolized the exodus of the Jews who, in their haste to escape Egypt, ate unleavened (without yeast) bread. Their exodus was from physical slavery.

What is the new *exodus* that Jesus is introducing?

Remember

Just as the Passover meal was a reenactment of the exodus from Egypt, it was more importantly a call to remember God's sovereign goodness in guiding them and providing for them in the wilderness as they travelled. The call to *remember* was (and is) central to the Passover feast.

Respond to the following quote:

Jesus makes a fresh symbol out of the bread in light of his death. He takes it, gives thanks, breaks it, and passes it around the table. "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In that moment, the Jewish meal becomes christianized, a memorial act in memory and proclamation of Jesus' death. . . . The call to "remember" is Jewish, which the nation did annually in the Passover as they looked back at the Exodus. Such recalling solidifies a community's identity by taking them back to their roots, to events that forged who they have now become. It gives them a chance, as one body, to reaffirm what God has done for them. . . . This meal is like a new start. (Bock, p. 551)

How does our collective gathering around the communion table *solidify our community identity*?

When you come to the communion table, what is your habit of *remembrance*? Share with your group.

As he talked, Jesus was preparing his disciples for something incredible –and something they wouldn't understand until much later. The Passover main dish would be lamb, representing the sacrifice each household would make for sin. Jesus announced the perfect—and forever—Passover lamb, himself. The cycle of sacrifice would be complete.

Understood this way, how do you see Passover and the cross as inextricably linked?

If this a hard concept for you to understand, what makes it confusing for you?

We may think, in our modern Western culture, that we don't live in an age where sacrifice covers offence. While it is true that we do not customarily slaughter an animal to repent from gossiping or cheating, we still have an internal sense that a transaction needs to take place. Why? Because we know that God embodies justice. Everyone—believers and unbelievers alike—want to know that God is just. To approach Him, we need to know that a transaction has occurred to make us innocent.

Respond to the following quote:

To understand Passover and the Cross, we need to look at the cycle of all history. With each event a grand spiral was forming, circling toward the final fulfillment of God's eternal purpose. These were not isolated events. From the beginning of time God had been saying to men, "There is no way to approach Me except by coming with a lamb." Sacrifice was ordained by God and instituted by Him in the beginning. Adam and Eve had never seen death. They didn't know what it was like. When they disobeyed God, he sacrificed an animal "to cover" their sin. "And the Lord God made garments of skin . . . and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21). Because of their eating the fruit and my [sin], death must occur. My sin must be covered in order for me to be in the presence of a Holy God. He used an innocent lamb to cover my guilt.¹

Think of other notable sacrifices in Scripture. Try to come up with at least three major references and share the Scripture passages with your groups. How do these sacrifices point to Christ?

Rejoice

When Jesus takes the traditional foods, breaks the bread, and pours the wine, his proclamations reveal a renovated Passover. The first change is that his death will usher in a new covenant (v. 20). The law of the Old Covenant has served its purpose.

Galatians 3:24 says, *So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.* (NIV, emphasis added)

If you are a follower of Christ, think for a moment when the truth of this Galatians verse first became real to you. Try to describe the freedom this has brought your life.

¹ Martha Zimmerman, *Celebrate the Feasts*, Bethany House, 1981, p. 51.

In verses 16-18, Jesus twice says a curious thing—that he will not partake of this meal again until it *finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God*, and until *the kingdom of God comes*.

Taken together with the Galatians verse, we can be confident that the good news of the gospel is experienced by us right now, and we also look forward to the promise of all things being made right at Christ's return.

What does Jesus promise when he returns? (Hint: again, verses 16 and 18).

Rejoice together as a group. Consider celebrating Communion, thanking God for the *now* (the freedom we experience right now in our relationships with Christ), and the *not yet* of God's kingdom—when all things will be made new.

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. (Revelation 21:4)

Praying the Passage: Luke 22:7-20

- Ponder the need for a Passover lamb to be sacrificed (Luke 22:7). Scripture tells us that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness for sins. Acknowledge before God our need for redemption. Confess your sins silently and out loud as appropriate in preparation for communion.
- Consider celebrating communion in your homegroup, perhaps passing around the cup and the bread, and having each person proclaim Jesus' words about His body and blood broken and shed for us in verses 19-20.
- After all have taken communion, ponder for a moment those who are not at your table—friends and family who have not yet found forgiveness through the Passover Lamb. Pray that one day you would share communion with them.
- Pray for the communion table to be expanded to every tribe and tongue and nation, as God promised it would. Lift up names of people groups and countries, remembering Jesus' words that many will come from east and west to take their place at the feast in the kingdom of God (Matthew 8:11).
- Pray for Jesus to return and eat this Passover with us as it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God (Luke 22:16). Pray for Him to make all things new, to wipe away every tear, and to bring us into everlasting joy.

Study Sixteen: Luke 22:21-34
Great, or Not So Great?

As we have seen thus far in Luke, the twelve disciples had a first-hand view of miracles and healings, and they heard teachings rivaled by none. Now Luke chronicles Jesus' time in the upper room with his disciples—his final intimate time with them as a group. Yet, it does not go as they might have expected. Tension mounts, Jesus' road to the cross will soon be completed.

In this scene, Jesus goes from the first Lord's Supper, breaking the bread and serving the cup to the disciples, to foretelling his betrayal by one of them. He corrects them over an argument about who is greatest. Jesus speaks of the disciples' privilege of eating and drinking at his table, in his kingdom, followed by a prediction of denial by one of his closest friends. The disparity of what Jesus said to them would have been alarming. There was the extension of blessing and joy, accompanied by shocking revelations of unimaginable betrayal. At the end of the day they must have been perplexed!



Read Luke 22:14-34, starting at the beginning of Jesus' discourse in the upper room. What stands out to you? If you have read this many times, read it slowly. Search for something you do not remember or may have overlooked in the past.

Luke 22:21

To *betray* is to deliver or expose someone to an enemy by treachery or disloyalty. In order to betray, there must first be a relationship, including some degree of intimacy, which naturally produces trust. Jesus says, *The hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table*. This comment indicates that the betrayer was sharing in fellowship with Jesus—as were the other eleven disciples—as he instituted the Lord's Supper.

Marshall comments on this verse. What is he saying? Put this in your own words. What is the warning?

Thus it is made clear that even presence at the Lord's table is no guarantee against apostasy, and a warning is laid before the readers of the Gospel. (Marshall, p. 807)

Luke 22:23

In verse 22, Jesus reminds the disciples that, *The Son of Man goes as it has been determined*, followed by the alarming statement, *woe to that man by whom he is betrayed*. Read verse 23. Think about the disciples' relationships with one another and with Jesus. What did they think, and how did they feel? What might they have been saying to each other?

Luke 22:24

As the disciples were puzzled as to which of them would betray Jesus, they proceeded to argue about which of them was to be considered as the greatest. What was fueling this conflict?

Luke 22:25-27

Read these three verses. Here we find Jesus' response to the disciples' dispute. Describe the two cultural paradigms of leadership Jesus mentions.

How does Jesus describe his principles of leadership? How have you seen this style of leadership displayed? (Think about different environments: home, church, work, school, government, etc.)

Our culture has at times tried to pick up on this principle of servant leadership. Consider this book title: *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*.¹ What does this title communicate? In the Wikipedia entry on *Servant leadership*, we learn that a servant leader *places his main focus on people, because only content and motivated people are able to reach their targets and to fulfill the set expectations*.

Read verse 26 again. How do these articulations of *servant leadership* compare with Jesus' teaching? Explain.

1 By Robert K. Greenleaf, Paulist Press, 1977.

Think about the realms of your life where you may exercise leadership—including but not limited to roles in your employment or an appointed position—where you manage, guide, direct, instruct, control, or encourage. How do Jesus' words and examples shape your leadership style? How might Jesus' teaching become an influence, or a stronger influence, in your life? How can you become *greater* on Jesus' measuring scale?

Luke 22:28-30

Jesus comments on his rule over the kingdom of God. Those disciples who have been faithful, and stayed with him through trials and persecutions, will be seated at his table, and rule with him. Presumably, the leadership of the disciples will be characterized by Jesus' teaching—each leading *as one who serves*.

Luke 22:31-34

These verses are multifaceted. Read verses 31-34 two or three times. List various aspects of the scene that Luke has included.

Jesus, by calling Peter *Simon, Simon*,¹ indicates the seriousness of what he is about to say. He begins, *Satan demanded to have you. . . .* This situation is like Job's,² in that Satan asks permission to torment. Darrell Bock illuminates what Satan, according to Jesus, intended for Peter.

The picture is of grain in a sieve, where the head of the grain is taken apart. Our English idiom of "picking someone to pieces" or "taking someone apart" has a similar emotive force. Satan would like to bring Peter to ruin and leave him in pieces, exposing his lack of faithfulness. (Bock Commentary, 2, p. 1742)

Read verse 32. Jesus tells Peter that Satan wants to tear him apart. What, then, did Jesus say he had done on Peter's behalf? What is Jesus' concern?

1 Simon Peter was his given name.

2 Job 1:7; 2:2

Consider and comment on the following statement. (See also Romans 8:34.)

Luke 22:31-32, which is unique to Luke, shows Jesus' exceptional knowledge of divine counsels and indicates his intercessory function on behalf of those allied to him. Satan fails to destroy Peter because Jesus intercedes for him. Jesus is stronger. (Bock Commentary, 2, p. 1743)

Read verses 31-32 again. Satan will go about attempting to tear Peter apart. Jesus prays that Peter's faith would not fail. In fact, he goes on to tell Peter that once he turns back he should strengthen his brothers! What do these verses teach about the Lord's intention and action in helping us through tumultuous or fallen times? What do they say about restoration? Have you seen or experienced this?

Jesus told Peter what would happen and Peter responded essentially saying, *No! No, I will serve you 'til the end!* Jesus, knowing the unfortunate truth, responds, *No, Peter, you will actually fall.* Peter thought he was *great*. Ponder the following statement.

Events will show this overconfidence to be an underestimation of how pressure can sift a person's allegiance to Jesus. (Bock Commentary, 2, p. 1743)

What does this look like? Can you think of a situation where a confident believer might collapse and betray his or her allegiance to Jesus? Have you experienced this?

What is the key for a Christian to not become overconfident like Peter? Consider the following passages and apply them to yourself.

Jeremiah 9:23-24

1Corinthians 1:27-31

Thankfully, the disciples' blunders and failings are recorded to instruct us. Reflect on this portion of Luke, the acts of betrayal and denial, the two debates—one about who went bad, one about who is best—and the exhibition of overconfidence.

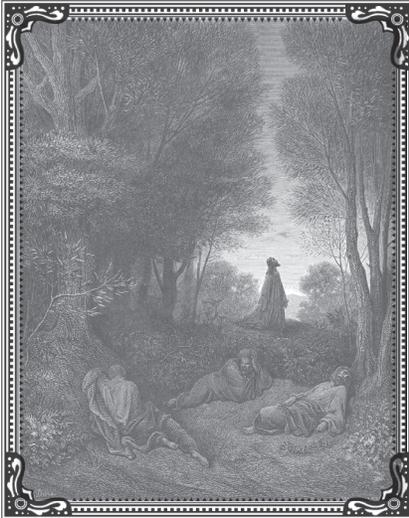
Let us follow what the Lord said through Jeremiah, . . . *let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice and righteousness in the earth* (Jeremiah 9:34). In these things, our God delights. May we serve greatly, and boast rightly!

Praying the Passage: Luke 22:21-34

- Revere this Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant (Philippians 2:6-7 and Luke 22:27).
- Praise God once again for His sovereignty and His word, that the scriptures are here being fulfilled even as Jesus is being betrayed. Read aloud the messianic prophecy of Psalm 41:9 and Psalm 55:12-14, and praise Jesus for what He endured on our behalf.
- Thank Jesus for His protection for each one of us, that no one will snatch us out of his hand (John 10:28), and that He will preserve us as He preserved Peter (Luke 22:32).
- Ponder that fact that Jesus has conferred on us a kingdom (Luke 22:29-30) and that the saints will judge the world (1Corinthians 6:2). Pray for each other that you would be faithful with little here on earth, so that you may be entrusted with much in the life to come.
- Pray for each other and for our churches that we would not revere or pursue power, but that we would take the very nature of servants. Pray this for our leaders and for public Christian figures.
- Pray for those who have fallen as Peter fell. Pray that they would turn back, and that God would once again use them to strengthen their brothers (Luke 22:32).

Study Seventeen: Luke 22:39-46

The Last Prayer



In Luke 22:39-46, we find one of the more intimate moments in Jesus' life. The end is very near. Taking his customary trip to the Mount of Olives Jesus turns from speaking to his disciples to praying to his Father. This was not new territory for Jesus but part of his spiritual habit.

ESV – *as was his custom*

NIV – *as usual*

The Greek word used here is *ethos*, meaning *accustomed place or habit or regular activity*. What we see Jesus doing in verse 39 is what he did on a regular basis. It is not a new practice. He was not having a rough day. It was not that he noticed that people weren't appreciating him the way he thought that they ought to be, and so he is throwing up a desperation prayer. Rather Jesus is simply doing what he does—he prays.

The first thing we must see in these verses is that prayer was a part of the life of Jesus, and thus must be a part of the life of everyone who desires to follow him.

Read Luke 22:39-46. What stands out to you as you read the passage? What bothers you or intrigues you? Write down any questions you hope to answer as you study or discuss with your homegroup.

The Mount of Olives

Peter, James, and John, go with Jesus to pray. They go from the city where they have been miraculously provided a place to share the Passover, and they walk to one of Jesus' favorite places, the Mount of Olives. What is barren and rocky today was a fertile and thriving grove of olive trees on a hill a couple miles outside of Jerusalem. It was from here that Jesus rode into Jerusalem only a short week ago, where he wept over Jerusalem, and where he goes in this darkest hour to pray.

Why did Jesus return to The Mount of Olives?

Jesus returns to this place of familiarity, not only familiar from this week, or from his life on earth, but from the time that he created it. The book of John tells us, *All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made* (1:3). Certainly this olive grove was covered in the fingerprints of God, created even for this moment of high history, where all of Christendom will look back to for strength and encouragement.

Nineteenth-century London pastor, F. W. Pitt writes the following poem¹ with cutting clarity the richness of the scene both within the garden and the greater setting of the events encompassing that holy weekend:

Maker of the Universe

As Man, for man was made a curse.

The claims of Law which He had made,
Unto the uttermost He paid.

His holy fingers made the bough,
Which grew the thorns that crowned His brow;

The nails that pierced His hand were mined,
In secret places He designed.

He made the forest whence there sprung
The tree on which His body hung;

He died upon a cross of wood,
Yet made the hill on which it stood.

The sky that darkened o'er His head,
By Him above the earth was spread.

The sun that hid from Him its face,
By His decree was poised in space.

The spear which spilled His precious blood
Was tempered in the fires of God.

The grave in which His form was laid
Was hewn in rocks His hands had made.

The throne on which He now appears
Was His from everlasting years;

But a new glory crowns His brow,
And every knee to Him shall bow:

The Maker of the universe.

Describe how the poem speaks to God's sovereignty.

Describe how some of the word pictures in this poem speak to you?

¹ Frederick William Pitt (1859-1943).

As Jesus leaves the disciples and walks just out of earshot to pray, he leaves one simple directive: *Pray that you may not enter into temptation*. What does he mean by this?

How has prayer helped you from entering into temptation?

Agony

Read verse 44. Throughout Scripture, we read Christ's encouragement to pray, and his counsel and insights on prayer, but here in the garden, we see and hear the exact words he uses to pray to his father in heaven.

Here is Jesus, facing the darkest valley of his life in the approaching crucifixion. Matthew records Jesus saying to his disciples, *My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me* (Matthew 26:38). The disciples have no idea what is ahead, and how close at hand it is, but Jesus knows. He is fully aware of the events to come and is distressed, even sorrowful. The Greek word is *perilupos*. It speaks of a deep and intense grieving. The King James translates it as *sorrowful* and *very heavy*.

Have you experienced a *perilupos* time in your life?

Were you able to take it to God in prayer?

If so, how did you pray? What happened as a result of your prayer(s)?

What agony, what sorrow, what intense pain, and inner turmoil our Savior battled on our behalf! Yet Jesus is without sin, without self-pity or complaint. Jesus is under duress. So much that he prays, *Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me*. In essence he is asking, *If there is any other way, any other solution to the sin of humanity, if there is possibly another way to do this, please, please let's do it that way*.

This is the part of Jesus' prayer with which we can identify.

God can you please get me out of this?

God is there any way I can avoid this?

God can you possibly do something about this situation?

The key difference between Jesus and us, is what happens next. We tend to wallow in sadness when we don't get what we ask. Perhaps we even grow to resent God for not acting how we expect him to act. Where we are tempted to fidget and fight, kick and squirm, Jesus gives us the perfect words to pray in these circumstances.

Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done (v. 42).

Why are those words so hard to pray?

Why is Jesus able to pray them with conviction?

Is it possible that we struggle to submit to God because ultimately we lack trust in him?

What will it take for us to trust that God really does have our best interests in mind?

Write down as many examples as you can remember of times when you realized after-the-fact that God was up to something bigger than you were aware of when you prayed. Encourage your homegroup by sharing these together.

Read and comment on the verses below. How do they help you better understand Jesus's words in Luke 22:42?

Romans 5:3-5

Romans 8:28

1Peter 1:7

Gethsemane

The word *Gethsemane* literally means *olive press*. This was the part of the Mount of Olives where the olives were pressed for oil. It is in this setting that Jesus falls to his knees in anguish and sorrow. He is being pressed on every side, buffeted and vexed, in the very place where crushing and pressing is a daily routine. In that place where thick drops of olive oil run from the press, we find Christ praying so earnestly that sweat like blood drops from his brow. In fewer than 24 hours thorns will pierce that very brow and draw with them crimson drops of Christ's blood that would stain the streets beneath him.

How can this scene be a reminder for us when we find ourselves in anguish and sorrow?

Consider the olive press of agonizing prayer. Read 2Corinthians 4:7-18. What insight does this passage add?

How does that passage change the *Gethsemane* moments in our lives, knowing that God is always at work even in the darkest times?

How does this affect our ability to pray the prayer of Jesus, *Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done?*

For extra credit, read John's further expansion of Christ's words in John 12:27-28. What new insights do John's words bring?

Sleeping

Matthew and Mark give further details regarding Jesus' repeated returns only to find a group of snoring disciples. *So could you not watch with me one hour? ...The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.* (Matthew 26:41) Finally, Jesus returns for the third time and the hour has come.

Why do you think the disciples struggle so much to stay awake? What lesson about prayer are we to learn from this?

Think about your own prayer life. When are you tempted to sleep?

Is there a spiritual correlation Jesus is making between prayer and sleep?

Why does Jesus warn the disciples again to not enter into temptation? Is he remaking the same point, or does this one carry a different meaning?

Gather up your thoughts from this study of Luke 22:39-46. What have you learned? What has challenged you in this passage?

What are one or two ways you can apply the principles in this passage to your life this week? Be specific.

Praying the Passage: Luke 22:39-46

- Spend a few moments in silence pondering Gethsemane and Jesus' anguish.
- Consider the disciples' failure to watch with Jesus in Gethsemane. Confess our own failure to enter the fellowship of Jesus' suffering, perhaps seeking a shortcut to the power of the resurrection (Philippians 3:10-11).
- Confess our prayerlessness and sloth (Luke 22:46). Repent of our self-confidence and lack of prayer in areas such as work, family, finances, and relationships. This may be a time to commit, in the presence of your homegroup, to sleeping a little less and rising a little earlier to pray, so you do not fall into temptation (Luke 22:46). Perhaps you also need to consecrate yourself to a few minutes on your knees before you go to bed at night, so that faith, rather than fatigue, may have the last word.
- Pray for one another by name, that you may be self-controlled and alert (1Peter 5:8), so that you can pray within the specific contexts of your lives.
- Let us imitate Jesus' pattern of praying earnestly in the depths of anguish (Luke 22:44). Pray earnestly for suffering believers, both locally and abroad. Pray that an angel from heaven may strengthen them (Luke 22:43). If you find yourself in anguish, pray for yourself in the presence of your homegroup, that they may *keep watch* with you. As you pray, consider repeating verse 44a as a litany in response to individual prayers:

And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly.

Study Eighteen: Luke 22:47-62

Just Like Jesus Said

Ponder the last days of Jesus' life on earth. We have looked at this time period over our last several studies in the Gospel of Luke. Jesus addresses the spiritual state of Jerusalem, and responds to challenges from the chief priests, scribes, Sadducees, and temple officers. In an upper room prepared for them, Jesus serves the first celebration of what we call the Lord's Supper to his disciples to teach the meaning of his imminent death. That time together ended with a prediction of betrayal by one of the twelve disciples, and then a prediction of denial by Peter. From the upper room, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives to pray, and as he prayed his disciples fell asleep. After he prayed, Jesus experienced the betrayal, and the denial that he had foretold. Judas and Peter forsook Jesus, just as he said they would.



Betrayal by Judas

Read Luke 22:47-53. What stands out? Comment on the details of this passage.

Luke 22:47-48

Even as Jesus is still talking with his disciples, Judas approached with a crowd including chief priests, temple officers, and elders coming to capture Jesus and take him to his death. What would that scene have looked like? How did it sound? What was the feeling?

Judas approaches Jesus in order to betray him—by means of a kiss. Jesus asks, *Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?*

The word in Greek translated “to kiss” is the same word for “to love” (*philein*). Thus we see the mocking horror of the gesture. This image of betrayal is one of the most powerful ever to grip the human imagination. (Hughes, 2, p. 341)

Luke refers to Judas as *one of the twelve*. The twelve had been with him since he called them at the beginning of his public ministry. They had seen his miracles and healings, and heard his teaching and explanations. Nevertheless, Judas had not become loyal to Jesus.

Judas [represents] someone who associates with Jesus, but is not really allied to him. Judas is a model of someone who makes a false profession and false association with Jesus, as his defection reveals his true allegiance. (Bock Commentary, 2, p. 1733)

What would it look like in this time and place for you, or someone you know, to betray Jesus?

Luke 22:49-53

Read again these five verses. List the aggressive or violent intentions and/or actions of each side. What shaped their approaches? How did Jesus react and address each group of people?

Chief priests, officers of the temple and elders

Disciples

We must remember that there is something bigger going on here than our minds can grasp. These are not random events. There is someone in control. Bock states it well in his summary.

Jesus' arrest in Luke 22:47-53 is a tragic moment when God allows the forces of evil to work their will. . . . Jesus is in control. He asks Judas if this is how the defecting disciple betrays the Son of Man, tells the disciples to put back their swords, and in one significant act of compassion heals the severed ear of one of those who will lead him to trial and death. He shows that he loves the enemy by how he responds to his arrest. He notes that the tone of his arrest is all wrong, for he is not a criminal (as his healing proves). He describes the nature of the times as darkness, rejection and evil. A mood of somber description falls upon the account like a dark cloud. Jesus is headed to trial. But the reader is to note who is in control. The hour of darkness, too, will pass. (Bock Commentary, 2, p. 1774)

Throughout Jesus' life, he was in control. He experienced betrayal, followed by beating, and a horrible death, but all by his own choice and the Father's will.

Denial by Peter

Among the disciples, Peter was prominent. The first three Gospels contain complete lists of the disciples. The Gospel of John a partial list, and the book of Acts provides a list minus Judas. Peter is listed first in each. It was Peter who identified Jesus as the Christ of God (Luke 9:20). Peter speaks more than any other disciple, and is addressed by Jesus the most. He is significant.

In 22:33, Peter proclaims *Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death*. As Jesus was being arrested, John tells us that it was Peter who struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear (John 18:10). After Jesus' arrest, when he was being taken to the house of the high priest, Peter followed along. He did not desert Jesus.

Peter provides an interesting paradox in this account. His following Jesus says that he has some interest and nerve. But just when the pressure is on, Peter fails repeatedly to align with Jesus. (Bock Commentary, 2, p. 1778)

Luke 22:54-60a

Following the crowd that took Jesus from the Mount of Olives to the house of the high priest, Peter entered the courtyard and found his way to the fire, seeking warmth.

Read verses 54-60 which record Peter's denials. Think about the words and probable tone of the three people who challenged Peter. What was going on here?

Consider this scene. Why did Peter respond this way? What do we learn about Peter?

Can you picture yourself as Peter in this scenario? What would that be like? How might you respond?

Luke 22:60b-62

Then the rooster crowed. Read verses 60-62. What happened? Put it into your own words. How would you tell this piece of Jesus' story?

Peter sinned; there is no question! Jesus previously told him he would, and Peter, with overconfidence, disagreed. To add to the matter, Jesus turned and looked straight at him, and Peter knew. What did Peter do? How do you think he felt? Had he failed forever? Did he have hope for forgiveness?

Due to his action and realization that it was sin, *Peter felt instant remorse over his denials. His sin of denial crushed his spirit* (Bock Commentary, 2, p. 1788). Have you ever felt this way? If you are able, share your experience with your homegroup. How did you respond?

In the very next sentence, Darrell Bock states, *Jesus later restores Peter, despite his failure here (John 21:1-14). In fact he has already prepared Peter for restoration (Luke 22:32)*. Can you identify one or more times Jesus has restored you after sin? List a few details.

We do not want to have a strategy such that we can intentionally sin. That said, what do you do, or will you do when you find yourself ashamed before your Lord because of your sin? Encourage one another in your homegroup on how to repent and seek restoration. If you are in that place now, make haste. Repent and seek restoration!

Peter and Judas both betrayed the Son of God. Following his restoration, Peter played a crucial role in the early church. His sermon at Pentecost powerfully communicated the gospel (Acts 2). Peter was the leader of the church at Jerusalem, and penned two books of the New Testament. He ultimately died a martyr, just as Jesus said he would (John 21:18-19). Judas' life, on the other hand, ended tragically.¹

Give glory to a just and merciful God, who by his own intentions suffered torture and death on our behalf. By the very same passion and intentions he helps us turn back and return to him. Pray that you would naturally feel remorse for your sin, and look to your savior for restoration!

Praying the Passage: Luke 22:47-62

- Celebrate once again the sovereignty of God, that He takes what was intended for evil—betrayal and crucifixion—and accomplishes the saving of many (Genesis 50:20).
- Tell God aloud the places and situations in this world where darkness still reigns (Luke 22:53b). Consider repeating verse 22:53b as a litany, not to celebrate darkness, but to remember that its reign is temporary, and that it too will be defeated:

But this is your hour--when darkness reigns.

- Confess our tendency to fight with worldly swords (Luke 22:49-50) instead of spiritual weapons (Ephesians 6:10-18). Name some false and impotent things we trust in as we engage the battles of life.
- Peter's over-confidence led to a spectacular fall. Confess to God your weakness and places of unwarranted confidence. Pray for each other that your faith may not fail (Luke 22:32) and that God would deliver you from the evil one.
- Pray for any who have fallen into temptation. Ask that God would restore them fully as He restored Peter, and that Satan's sifting (Luke 22:31) would ultimately be defeated by the grace of God.
- Pray for one another by name to have supernatural boldness to acknowledge instead of deny Christ. Ask God to transform us as He transformed Peter.

¹ Luke penned an account of Judas' death in Acts 1:16-18. Matthew, in his gospel, records it differently (Matthew 27:5). Either way, Judas' death was no less than tragic.

Study Nineteen: Luke 22:63–23:25

On Trial

On May 24, 2010 the television crime drama *Law & Order* aired its final show of its 20th season, making it the second-longest running prime time series of all time. It has spun off a couple of alternate versions of the show, and there are plenty of other courtroom dramas on television, (not to mention the celebrity judge shows). All of this points to our culture's interest in law, legal proceedings and the meting out of justice. In this study, we will be looking at a courtroom drama unlike any other.

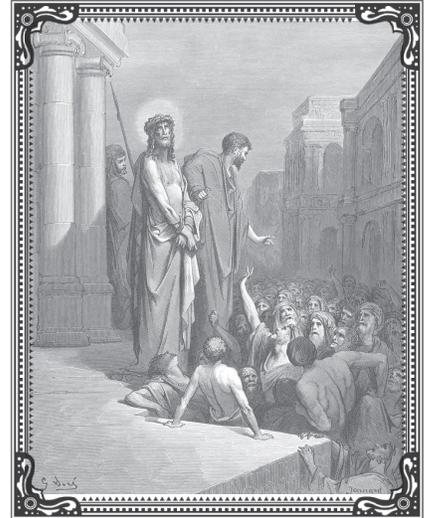
Last week, we left off with Judas' betrayal of Jesus in the garden, and Peter's betrayal of Jesus in the court of the High Priest. This week's passage can easily be broken into a few scenes:

Jesus before the Sanhedrin – 22:63-71

Jesus before Pilate – 23:1-7

Jesus before Herod – 23:8-12

The Sentencing – 23:13-25



As you read Luke 22:63–23:25, consider the characters and drama that unfold. Write down anything that sticks out to you, or any questions you may have.

In this study, we will be looking at the various characters in the story. Keep in mind the outline above, as we will move around within the passage.

The Chief Priests and Scribes

One could argue that though Jesus is the subject of all the unfolding action, the main characters in this passage are really the chief priests and the scribes. They are the prosecutors in the Trial and the main drivers of the plot, dragging Jesus from place to place.

Read Luke 22:66-71, what questions do they ask of Jesus? And more importantly, what answers do they expect? From their perspective, what is wrong with Jesus' answers?

These are not the questions of a skeptic trying to get to the bottom of the truth, these are the questions of an accuser. Think about your non-Christian friends. What questions of Jesus are they asking? Are they on the cusp of belief, with a few doubts still lingering? Or do they accuse God with their questions?¹

What about you? Have there been times in your life when you have hurled accusations at God? Be honest. What were the circumstances? What was the outcome?

Jesus knows they will not like his answer to their questions of his identity. In 22:67 he says, *If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I ask you, you will not answer...*

Read Luke 20:1-8. What similarities do you see? What seems to be the main problem with the chief priests, scribes, and elders according to Jesus?

Read Luke 23:1-12 again, focusing specifically on the role of the chief priests and scribes. How would you describe them based on the rest of the drama? What drives them?

¹ The exclusive claims of Christ come to mind. Often, non-Christians are more concerned with the fact that Jesus would claim exclusivity rather than considering if his claims are true.

Herod

After the prosecution complete its pretrial examination, Jesus is brought to the judge–Pilate. But he quickly punts to a lower-court judge, Herod. Read 23:6-12, what is your initial perspective of Herod? How does he come across?

What is Herod interested in? Read Luke 9:7-9 for more context. What is Herod looking for in Jesus?

Respond to the following quote:

Herod is a man of intolerable frivolity. All he wants is to see some magic; and when Jesus refuses to play, Herod's curiosity turns to contempt. (Wilcock, p. 195)

There is an intense irony here: the Messiah is on trial being falsely accused, the Son of God is about to face execution, God's cosmic plan of redemption through his own death is unfolding—and Herod wants to see a few tricks!

Do you ever feel like Herod? Bringing it home, we all at times allow the silliest things to keep us from spending time with God. Be honest, what *intolerable frivolities* keep you from hearing from Jesus in his word and prayer?

Herod goes on to lower himself to the comedic level of his soldiers, *arraying him in splendid clothing* (v. 11), sending him back to Pilate, finding Jesus innocent (v. 15).

Pilate

We have only heard of Pilate once before in Luke in chapter 13. What do we know about him so far?

Read Pilate's first scene in 23:1-7. What do we learn about him here? What do you make of him sending Jesus to Herod? What might he have been thinking or doing?

Bock writes,

The first meeting with Pilate . . . is fascinating because despite his judgment that Jesus is innocent, the process continues. (Bock, pp. 582-583)

After Herod concurs that Jesus is innocent, Pilate initiates the sentencing phase (vv. 13-25). Despite the Jewish elders charges that they *found* Jesus *misleading the nation*, three times, Luke tells us, Pilate *finds* Jesus not guilty (vv. 4, 14, 22). He sentences Jesus to be *punished and released* (vv. 16, 22).

The religious leaders and the crowd keep pushing the Roman governor, asking instead for Barabbas to be released. This is truly surprising and ironic; the people call for someone found guilty of heinous crimes in place of the Messiah who was found innocent. Even more surprising is that the Roman governor, whose position is to establish and issue justice, goes along with this plan. As Green writes, *Pilate acts ultimately in order to assuage a riotous mob, to preserve peace rather than to promote justice* (Green, p. 811).

The ruler is found weak, as *their voices prevailed* (v. 23). Respond to this verse. Have there been times in your life that you have let *voices prevail*, instead of standing up for what is right?

The Heidelberg Catechism states that our three main enemies are Satan, the world, and our own flesh. Describe your efforts to prevent *their voices from prevailing*?

Who is on Trial?

An important aspect of this courtroom drama that may be easy to miss is a statement Jesus makes earlier. In 22:69, Jesus responding to the Sanhedrin's questions of identity says, *But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.* What is he saying?

Throughout this whole story, every character acts as if they are the judge: the chief priest and the elders (22:66), Pilate (23:4,14, 22), Herod (23:9, 15), and even the people (23:18, 21, 23). But what does Jesus say? *From now on it is Jesus who will occupy the throne of Judgment* (Wilcock, p. 194).

We realize from Jesus' statement, that in reality, he is the Judge and we are the one's being examined! Jesus has told us and shown us who he is; will we believe? If he asks us, will we answer? (22:67-68)

Think about the characters in this study. With whom do you most identify? Why?

As we wrap up this week's study, we realize one character has been neglected a bit. More than anyone, we are like Barabbas. Respond to this quote by Darrell Bock,

Romans 5:5-8 summarizes Jesus' death as the just for the unjust. He dies (literally) in an unjust person's place. Though the sin we commit may not be murder, nonetheless Jesus suffers on the cross for our sin. That message resounding from the cross is timeless. Barabbas represents the position we are all in as a result of Jesus' death: We are able to live because he died. In the midst of all the injustice, the grace of God shines through. (Bock, p. 589)

Praying the Passage: Luke 22:63 - 23:25

- Ponder the many things that the Lord of all creation suffered on our behalf, including mockery and insult (22:63-65, 23:11), hostile questioning (22:66-71), false accusation (23:2,5), being treated as a mere magician (23:8), becoming a political pawn between Pilate and Herod (23:6-12), submitting to decisions of weak and unjust rulers, and being subjected to a demeaning prisoner exchange (23:25). Consider that God willingly endured this humiliation on our behalf. No other religion speaks of a God such as this. Revere Him, and praise Him that we are privileged to worship and know Him!
- Pray for each other and the church at large, that we may have the attitude of Christ Jesus as we encounter an unjust world.
- Pray for people you know who respond to Jesus in the varied ways of which this passage speaks of. Pray for persecutors, unjust rulers, and those they oppress. Pray that those who put God on trial would realize that ultimately God will put us on trial. Pray they may know the Jesus who has secured our forgiveness.
- Consider how Jesus here became a substitute for Barabbas, dying in his place. Ponder His dying in our place. Finish by naming and thanking Him for the specific sins of ours, which He took away by His sacrifice on the cross.