

## **“Jesus’ Final Appeal”**

May 2, 2021

Luke 20:41-21:4

### **I. Introduction**

As we consider Jesus’ miracles and teachings, His insightful responses to the attacks of the Jewish leaders, we sometimes forget His humanity. But [Hebrews 2:17](#) reminds us that Jesus “**had to be made like them fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.**” Like those He came to save, Jesus endured the physical limitations of being human, He became hungry ([Matthew 4:1-2](#)), thirsty ([John 4:7](#)), and tired ([John 4:5-6](#)). He experienced the full range of human emotions, including joy ([Luke 10:21](#)), sorrow ([Matthew 26:37](#)), love ([John 11:5, 36](#)), compassion ([Matthew 9:36](#)), amazement ([Luke 7:9](#)), and even anger ([Mark 3:5](#)).

As we come to today’s Scripture, it’s been a long Passover week and a long day for Jesus—the day began with “**the chief priests and the teachers of the law, together with the elders**” coming to Him and demanding, “**“Tell us by what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you the authority to do this?”**” ([Luke 20:1-2](#)). Later that same day, the Sanhedrin had made several attempts to trap and destroy Him. But instead, He had defeated them, and, in the process, He had humiliated them to the point that they didn’t dare ask any more questions. But, in spite of the animosity and hatred directed at Him by the leaders and the lack of concern of the crowd, as Wednesday drew to a close, Jesus made one final appeal to them. While everyone was still gathered together, Jesus asked them a question. It was a question about David’s Son: Who is the Messiah?

### **II. Who is the Messiah?**

The Jewish teaching was that the “*Christ*,” or the “*Messiah*,” the anointed One, was to be a direct descendant of David and that He would restore David’s kingdom upon His coming as the Messiah. However, He was viewed as nothing more than a man. They expected him to be an earthly ruler with unparalleled power and influence. He would conquer Israel’s enemies and fulfill all the promises that

were given to Abraham and repeated and expanded in the promises given to David—promises of a coming king and eternal kingdom. The Jewish people viewed the messiah as the savior of the nation as a whole, but not of individual souls. They did not (and still do not) believe that the messiah would be God in human flesh.

According to Matthew's account in [Matthew 22:41-42](#), Jesus began by asking the religious leaders, “‘What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?’ They replied, ‘The son of David.’” Luke picked up the conversation with Jesus' rhetorical question: “How is it that they say the Christ is the Son of David?”

The Bible does say that the Messiah is the descendant of David—[turn to Psalm 89:3-4, 35-37](#). The genealogies of Jesus offer undeniable proof that He was a descendant of David. Both His earthly father, Joseph, in [Matthew 1:1-17](#) and His mother, Mary, in [Luke 3:23-38](#) are shown to be direct descendants of David and thus, Jesus was as well. The belief that the Messiah would be the son of David was correct, but incomplete. Jesus showed this lack by quoting from [Psalm 110:1](#), “The LORD said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’”

Here is the problem—the conundrum, if you please: If the Messiah is the Son of David, Jesus asked, “Why does David address Him as ‘my Lord, How then can he be his son?’” It is unusual for a father to address his son in this way. One expects the exact opposite. The learned Jewish theologians didn't have an answer and remained quiet.

The only way David's son could also be David's Lord; the only way God could declare to David's Lord, “Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet,” would be if David's Son was coequal with God the Father in rank and authority. The only possible answer is that David's Son, the Messiah, must be God come in human flesh. Just like the New Testament, the Old Testament reveals not only the Messiah's humanity as David's son, but also His deity as David's Lord exalted at the right hand of God the Father. This is not an either-or proposition; Jesus the Christ is both fully God and fully man. John summarized this in his gospel—[turn to the Gospel of John 1:1-4](#).

Mark 12:37 adds that “the large crowd listened to him with delight.” Sadly, they merely enjoyed listening to Jesus and watching Him baffle the leaders. Jesus’ final invitation to them didn’t touch their hearts at all—no one fell on their face in the presence of Almighty God Incarnate to repent and confess Him as Lord and Savior. In fact, in just a couple of days, some of these same people would be screaming for His execution.

### III. Beware of the Teachers of the Law

After this last confrontation with the religious leaders, Jesus would say nothing more to them until His trial. The last two teachings that Jesus taught in the Temple were addressed to His disciples. The crowd may have listened in, but Jesus was focused on His disciples as He said, “Beware of the teachers of the law.”

In Mark 12:34, Jesus had commended one teacher of the law when He said, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” But here, Jesus denounced them as a group. Jesus has no tolerance for false teachers—those who hold a corrupt view of the Scripture, of Christ, and the Gospel. Since most teachers of the law, scribes, were Pharisees, all the Pharisees were also included in this denunciation and warning.

Since they were held in such high esteem, to hear Jesus denounce the teachers of the law must have shocked everyone listening. The Pharisees and scribes were revered as the gatekeepers of the law and the protectors of the people. They were the “experts;” they defined the law for everyone and held them to its standards. The Mishnah, a collection of Jewish religious writings, declares, “*It is more sinful to transgress the words of the Scribes, i.e., the teachers of the law, than those of the Torah.*” But in Matthew 23:25-26 Jesus said, “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.” They were hypocrites, full of greed and selfishness.

After warning the disciples of their true nature, Jesus gave five examples of the hypocrisy of the teachers of the law. First, “They like to walk around in flowing robes.” In pride, they wore elaborate

robes to set themselves apart from others and to emphasize their authority. Second, they “love to be greeted in the marketplaces.” In their pride, they were puffed up when the rabble stood and bowed before them and said, “*Good morning, Rabbi.*” “*Good morning, master.*” Third, in their insatiable pride for attention, they eagerly sought “the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets.” They craved the spots that would allow them to be seen by all the “*common people.*”

These 1<sup>st</sup> three examples demonstrated the obsessive pride of the scribes and Pharisees, but the 4<sup>th</sup> example of hypocrisy showed their massive greed which led them to take advantage of the helpless members of society and “devour widows’ houses.” They abused their hospitality, defrauded others of their estates, and even took their houses as pledges for debts that they could never repay. They also demanded that widows give money to purchase God’s blessings. They were greedy beyond belief. Finally, “for show” they offered “lengthy prayers.” Their prayers, like the rest of their religion, was nothing more than a pretense; an outward show; as Matthew 6:7 said, a “babbling like pagans” designed not to honor God but to exalt themselves.

Jesus said, that instead of being rewarded by God for their self-righteous, self-promoting religion, as they expected, the teachers of the law “will be punished most severely.” Because they knew the truth and rejected it, they would receive a severe punishment-- Hebrews 10:29 says, “How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?” The judgment on Israel’s leadership would be severe because not only did they knowingly reject the truth, but also led others astray-- James 3:1 says, “Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.” And then we see . . .

#### **IV. The Widow’s Offering**

At the end of this long, weary day of ministry Mark wrote that “Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury”

(Mark 12:41). The “temple treasury” consisted of 13 trumpet-shaped chests around the walls of the court of the women, and here the people dropped in their offerings.

The rich made a big production out of their giving and their praying—turn to Matthew 6:1-5. Jesus rejected them and their gifts—they gave out of pride as they gave out of their abundance, but there was no sacrifice. On the other hand, the poor widow gave all that she had to live on, which was next to nothing. She showed complete trust in God to provide for her and so gave her all to God. For the rich, their gifts were a small contribution, but for the widow, her offering was a symbol of the dedication of her whole life to God.

## V. Conclusion

Like the widow, our love for God should be in response to God’s love for us. Because God gave His all for us, we can do no less than love God with our whole selves. God doesn’t save us by degrees or fractions, and we are not to offer God just a part or fraction of ourselves. In Matthew 6:24 Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon or money.” You will be ruled by one or the other. The person who is double-minded will eventually, like the Pharisees and teachers of the law, fall to the power of Mammon and pride. You cannot play in a pig pen without getting dirty. One cannot seek power, wealth, control, sensual gratification and at the same time be submissive to God’s will. In Matthew 6:21 Jesus said, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Those who try to straddle the fence by giving God only a token of love while maintaining a close friendship with the world are doomed to be frustrated in this world and doomed in the world to come. With God, it is all or nothing. That’s why Paul wrote in Romans 12:1, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God--this is your true and proper worship.” Have you really made Jesus your Lord and Savior? Have you given your entire self as a sacrifice to God? Or are you like the Pharisees, do you put on a good show “but inside ~~they~~ you are full of greed and self-indulgence?” Choose this day whom you will serve.