

67. Jesus Answered the Herodians

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain to others the warning that Jesus gave the Jews about coming judgment. We will see in our topic today that the Herodians then came with a question to try and trap Jesus and the next topic will be about a question that the Sadducees asked Jesus in their final effort to try and trap Jesus.

Jesus had just given the parable of vineyard owner. Most of the time, Jesus spoke in parables so that the crowds would not understand; but then, Jesus would explain them to His disciples later. Jesus had told His disciples in Luke 8:10, “And He said, ‘To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest *it is given* in parables, that “Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.”” However, we see that the Jewish religious leaders did understand at least part of the parable about the vineyard owner. Luke 20:19 says, “And the chief priests and the scribes that very hour sought to lay hands on Him, but they feared the people—for they knew He had spoken this parable against them.” Most of the scribes were Pharisees.

Here, we see that both the chief priests and the scribes recognized that the parable of the vineyard owner was spoken against them. Jesus had concluded that parable by saying in Luke 20:15-18, ““So they cast him out of the vineyard and killed *him*. Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those vinedressers and give the vineyard to others.’ And when they heard it they said, ‘Certainly not!’ Then He looked at them and said, ‘What then is this that is written: “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone”? Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.”” The chief priests and scribes may not have understood the entire parable, but they certainly understood that when Jesus said the owner would destroy those vinedressers and give the vineyard to others that Jesus had said they would be judged.

These religious leaders wanted to lay hands on Jesus that very hour because they knew that Jesus had spoken this parable against them. However, we see that the religious leaders feared the people. That fear is explained in more detail in Luke 22:2-6 where we read, “And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might kill Him, for they feared the people. Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve. So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them. And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. So he promised and sought opportunity to betray Him to them in the absence of the multitude.” Here, we see that the Jewish religious leaders promised to give Judas money if he would betray Jesus to them in the absence of the people. We see that the Jewish religious leaders wanted to catch Jesus when no one was around, put Him on trial and then turn Him over to the Romans to kill Him without most of the people realizing what had happened until Jesus was on the cross.

However, Judas had not yet agreed to betray Jesus and so we see that the Jewish religious leaders sent spies to trap Jesus. Luke 20:20-21 says, “So they watched *Him*, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, that they might seize on His words, in order to deliver Him to the power and the authority of the governor. Then they asked Him, saying, ‘Teacher, we know that You say and

teach rightly, and You do not show personal favoritism, but teach the way of God in truth.” Here, we see that the Jewish religious leaders thought that they had figured out a way to trap Jesus and give them an excuse to turn Jesus over to the Romans so that the Romans would put Jesus to death. Matthew 22:15-16 say, “Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in *His* talk. And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, ‘Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men.’” Here, we see that the Pharisees decided to trap Jesus by sending both Pharisees and Herodians together to question Jesus.

The Herodians were a political party that supported the rule of Herod as the Roman governor. In contrast, the Pharisees hated the Roman government and wanted to get rid of the Romans. Jesus had already been told that Herod wanted to kill Him. Luke 13:31 says, “On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, ‘Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You.’” As a result, the Herodians who wanted to keep Herod in power would report anything to the Romans that would give the Romans an excuse to get rid of Jesus. However, both the Herodians and the Pharisees were so fearful of Jesus that they both wanted to get rid of Him. By coming to Jesus, together the two groups thought that they could trap Jesus.

Before asking Jesus the question that they thought would trap Jesus, we see that the religious leaders sent spies who pretended to be righteous. These men thought that they could trap Jesus by His words because they hoped to get Jesus to speak against Caesar, the Roman emperor. If Jesus spoke against the Roman emperor, then the Herodians would have turned Jesus over to the Roman governor, accused Jesus of speaking against Caesar and then demand that the Roman governor put Jesus to death for treason against the Roman government.

The spies wanted to hide their real goal and so they praised Jesus for several things before they asked their question. First, they said, “Teacher, we know that You say and teach rightly.” Here, we see that they said they recognized the things Jesus said and taught were right. Second, they said, “You do not show personal favoritism.” In this statement, we see they recognized that Jesus did not treat His friends in a different way than He treated those who spoke against Him. Third, they said, “You...teach the way of God in truth.” Even though these men were trying to trap Jesus, they had to recognize that He taught the way of God and He spoke the truth. These things were all true of Jesus. However, these spies were only saying them to cover up the fact that they were actually trying to trap Jesus. This shows us that it is possible for people to know and even speak the truth at the same time that their hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked. These spies were willing to do whatever it took to trap Jesus.

We go on to read the question of the spies and see the way that Jesus answered. Luke 20:22-26 says, “‘Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?’ But He perceived their craftiness, and said to them, ‘Why do you test Me? Show Me a denarius. Whose image and inscription does it have?’ They answered and said, ‘Caesar's.’ And He said to them, ‘Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.’ But they could not catch Him in His words in the presence of the people. And they marveled at His answer and kept silent.” This might sound like a simple question. However, we have seen that both Herodians and Pharisees

were there. The Herodians were looking for an excuse to say that Jesus had told the people to disobey the Roman law. The Pharisees were looking for an excuse to say that Jesus was not honoring God. Jesus knew that both groups were actually trying to test and trap Him with the question.

Then, Jesus asked them to show Him a Roman coin. He asked those who were questioning Him whose picture was on the coin and whose title was on the coin. The men said that the picture and the title both belonged to the Roman Caesar. The word translated “render” *means to give or to pay what is due*. As a result, Jesus was saying what is due to Caesar pay to Caesar and what is due to God give to God. The reason that God has established human government is explained in Romans 13:2-4 which says, “Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to *execute* wrath on him who practices evil.” In these verses, we see that governments are established to maintain good works and punish evil works.

Suddenly, these spies realized that Jesus had answered their trick question in such a way that neither the Herodians nor the Pharisees could condemn the answer of Jesus. Instead of tricking Jesus by getting Him to criticize the Roman government, Jesus answered in such a way that all of the people present realized that they had a responsibility to human government and they had a responsibility to God. Here, we are reminded that God can even work through evil governments to maintain order in a country. Later, Peter taught this same principle when he said in 1 Peter 2:13-14, “Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and *for the* praise of those who do good.”

The Jewish religious leaders were very upset that they could not catch Jesus by the words that He spoke. They had wanted to get Jesus to say something that would have made it possible for them to bring an accusation against Jesus to the Roman governor. The religious leaders wanted to do this while there were other people around Jesus who would have heard the words of Jesus. That way, the religious leaders felt that they could not be blamed if the Romans arrested Jesus. Here, we see that the Pharisees and Herodians had failed in their attempt to trick Jesus with their question. We want to help our physical and spiritual children realize that they will also face people who want to trick them by the way that they ask questions. We want to help our children learn to realize the importance of asking the Holy Spirit for guidance as they answer such questions. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to answer the questions of others.