

## 69. Jesus Questioned the Scribes in the Temple

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to follow the example of Jesus and answer the questions of others from the Scriptures. We have seen that Jesus repeatedly used the Scriptures to answer the questions both of those who believed and of those who rejected Him. We want to help our children learn to answer questions with Scriptures instead of their own opinions. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus first questioned the scribes and then warned His disciples not to follow the actions of the scribes.

Luke 20:39-44 says, “Then some of the scribes answered and said, ‘Teacher, You have spoken well.’ But after that they dared not question Him anymore. And He said to them, ‘How can they say that the Christ is the Son of David? Now David himself said in the Book of Psalms: “The Lord said to my Lord, sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.” Therefore David calls Him “Lord”; how is He then his Son?’ The scribes realized that Jesus had given a good answer to the Sadducees. They realized that they could not trap Jesus with questions. As a result, they were afraid to ask Jesus any more questions.

Instead, Jesus asked them a question. One of the things that the Jewish religious leaders often did was to refer to the Christ as the Son of David. That was one of the ways that they tried to avoid admitting that the Christ is God. Jesus then quoted Psalm 110:1 and asked them to explain what that verse meant since David had written that Psalm. That Psalm says, “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’” Jesus quoted that statement and then asked His question, “Therefore David calls Him 'Lord'; how is He then his Son?” The religious leaders immediately realized that they could not answer that question without admitting the fact that the Christ is God. As a result, they did not answer His question.

Here, we see that Jesus was forcing the religious leaders to make a choice. Christ is the translation of the Hebrew word for “Messiah”. This verse speaks of the fact that the Messiah would be sitting at the right hand of the Father. If they answered the question, they would have to recognize that the Christ is God because David had said that His Son was also his Lord. The Jewish religious leaders refused to admit that fact. A few years later, Stephen said, in Acts 7:54-58, “When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with *their* teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, “‘Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!’” Then they cried ‘out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast *him* out of the city and stoned *him*. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.’” It was some of these very same religious leaders that were cut to the heart by the words of Stephen.

Luke 20:45-47 goes on to say, “Then, in the hearing of all the people, He said to His disciples, ‘Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.’” In these verses, we see that Jesus was teaching His disciples. However, He also gave the whole crowd an opportunity to

hear what He said to His disciples. The scribes tried to control the people by claiming that they had a superior knowledge of the Word of God since they spent much time making copies of Old Testament scrolls. Instead, Jesus made it very clear to His disciples and the other people listening that the scribes were hypocrites and controlled by pride.

The word translated “beware” means *to listen closely and pay attention or to devote thought and effort to something*. Jesus wanted the disciples to think about the true inner character of the scribes. The word translated “desire” means *to purpose, to love or to be determined to do something*. First, the scribes loved to go around in long robes. The word translated “long robes” spoke of the long outer garments that extended to the feet and were worn by kings, priests or people of high rank. Proverbs 16:18 says, “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Here, we see that the scribes wanted to show their pride by their robes.

Second, we see that the scribes wanted greetings in the marketplaces. These were words of praise to the scribes because of the titles that they gave themselves. John 12:42-43 says, “Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *Him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” Many of the scribes were leaders in their synagogues and belonged to the Pharisees rather than the Sadducees. Here, we see that pride was shown by the fact that many of the rulers were more anxious for the praise of people than they were for the praise of God.

Third, we see that the scribes loved the best seats in the synagogues. The bench next to the box where the Old Testament scrolls were stored was considered the bench with the best seats in the synagogue because that bench was reserved for the leaders and well-known visitors who visited their synagogue. Christ had said in Luke 11:43, “Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces.” Closely related to the best seats in the synagogues were the best places at feasts. Luke 14:7-8 says, “So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: ‘When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him.’” Christ had made it clear that those who loved the best seats would be judged for their pride.

Fourth, we see that Christ said the scribes devoured the houses of widows and for a pretense made long prayers. The word translated “devour” means *to consume by eating, to waste or to steal the property of widows*. Here, we see that the scribes were quick to steal the property of widows to increase their own riches. Then, they would try to cover up the fact that they had robbed the widow by praying a long prayer for the widow. Jesus said that such scribes would receive a greater judgment for their sin.

As Jesus was speaking about the actions of the scribes, He was close to the thirteen chests where the people gave their various offerings. Jesus had just spoken about the hypocrisy of the scribes and the way that they cheated poor widows. At that very time, Luke 21:1-4 says, “And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. So He said, ‘Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than

all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had.” Many of the rich were putting large gifts into these chests where they gave their offerings. In contrast to the rich, there was also a very poor widow who came to give her gift to the Lord by placing her offering in one of those chests.

The woman put two copper coins into a money chest. The two copper coins were worth about 1/32 of a denarius (a day’s wage in that time). Matthew 20:2 says, “Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.” In that day, a worker would usually work twelve hours to earn a day’s wages. That meant that this poor widow was putting in the amount of money that could be earned in a little over twenty minutes of work out in a vineyard.

Many of the disciples and the crowd were probably watching the rich as they placed large gifts in the offering chests. Suddenly, Jesus said something that probably shocked most of the people that could hear Him. Jesus said that the extremely poor widow had given a larger offering than any of the rich. Most of the Jews thought that the rich were the most likely to get to heaven because they thought God was showing them His favor by giving them riches. (Many people today have that same attitude.) When the rich young ruler went away from Him in sadness, Jesus said, in Luke 18:24-25. “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” Here, we see that Jesus said that it was difficult for those who are rich to enter the kingdom of God. This is due to the fact that people who depend on their riches instead of depending on Christ put their trust in those riches and not in the Lord.

In contrast, this woman showed by her actions that her trust was in the Lord. She did not have riches but she did have true faith. Here, faith was shown by the fact that she trusted the Lord to supply the food that she would need that very evening. She was thankful for the fact that she had something to give to the Lord. This caused her to trust the Lord to supply her needs. The Christians in Philippi understood this same thing. In spite of their poverty, Philippians 4:17-19 says, “Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things *sent* from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” The Philippians gave to the Lord with the same attitude as this poor widow. In the same way, we want to show our children, by our example, that we trust in the Lord to supply our needs.