

# LUKE—WEEK 25

## JESUS STUMPS THE EXPERTS



F. Michael Slay  
*A DEEP Study*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*Luke 20:19–21:9 — Jesus Stumps the Experts*

*The Cover Picture is “Entry into Jerusalem” by Giotto (1267–1337)  
on display at Cappella degli Scrovegni (Arena Chapel), Padua*

Jesus frustrates all the attempts to trap Him with trick questions. Then He fires back with some harsh criticism. The disciples ask about the end times, and Jesus launches the Olivet Discourse.

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Thank you.

Luke 20:19–21:9 — Jesus Stumps the Experts  
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1 Luke 20:19–26 (ESV)

*The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at that very hour, for they perceived that he had told this parable against them, but they feared the people. So they watched him and sent spies, who pretended to be sincere, that they might catch him in something he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor. So they asked him, “Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?” But he perceived their craftiness, and said to them, “Show me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?” They said, “Caesar’s.” He said to them, “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they were not able in the presence of the people to catch him in what he said, but marveling at his answer they became silent.*

The judicial system is run by Rome. Roman justice is brutal. *So they watched him and sent spies ... that they might catch him in something he said .... So they asked him, “... Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?”*

Remember, they aren’t just looking to discredit Jesus; they’re looking to destroy Him. If they can get Him to say something that can be construed as rebellious, then they have a charge they can use against Him. Rebellion is a capital crime under Roman law.

Of course, if Jesus really is a rebel, He’d be the kind of Messiah they’re expecting, and they’d have been on His side all along. But now they’re just trying to trap Him with cheap tricks.

The Roman taxes are unpopular in Israel, partly because of the corrupt way they’re administered. *The scribes and the chief priests* figure that Jesus, as a popular personality, won’t say something unpopular. They hope He’ll slip up and say something against paying taxes, or at least say something they can twist.

But His clever comeback leaves them speechless.

They really don’t know the guy.

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We live in a country that was pretty much started by a tax revolt just like the one the scribes and chief priests were hoping for. Yet here we are, with a lot of people complaining about taxes. All is not well in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

But just as it was under Roman rule, the problem isn’t really taxes. We have strayed from the Christian principles our founding fathers held so dear. Meanwhile, our politics have become totally polarized.

We need to pray regularly for revival in America. Only radical change can fix this. Ask God to bless our nation through His church.

It has to start here. Nothing else will do.

2 Luke 20:27–40 (ESV)

*There came to him some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection, and they asked him a question, saying, “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife, and died without children. And the second and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died. Afterward the woman also died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife.”*

*And Jesus said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him.” Then some of the scribes answered, “Teacher, you have spoken well.” For they no longer dared to ask him any question.*

This passage says something interesting about heaven, but it says something more important about angels. Angels don't reproduce. Despite all the artwork depicting little cherubic baby angels, there are no baby angels. Every angel is thousands of years old. This applies to demons too.

Christians ignore angels and demons at their peril. They're incredibly powerful. This passage shows another important trait—they are incredibly experienced.

Think about the difference between someone who has six month's experience in a field versus someone who has 50 years (100 times as much). Night and day, right? So multiply by 100 again and try to imagine experts with 5,000 years of experience.

The forces of evil are not only smart and powerful, they have tried every trick in the book countless times and have figured out what works and what doesn't. They know the ideal time to try something. They know what situations are best. They have experienced every form of failure, and have learned how to avoid the pitfalls. Someone with just a hundred years of experience is a neophyte in their eyes.

We can be tricked in ways we could have never imagined. A recent mistake involving someone holding a Post-it note up to a camera is a terrifying case in point. Who could have seen that one coming?

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We don't just need to pray; we need hearts of prayer. If prayer is something we do for a few minutes and then hang up, we've missed the point. Sure, we do other things, but our hearts and our minds should never be totally disconnected. We need to learn to always be plugged in to God.

This leads to a curious prayer request. We need to pray about how to pray. A life of constant connection (constant prayer) should feel different. It is different. Ask God to teach you permanent prayer.

The Holy Spirit is your connection. Invite Him to have total 24/7 control.

3 Luke 20:41–47 (ESV)

*But he said to them, “How can they say that the Christ is David's son? For David himself says in the Book of Psalms,*

*“The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.””*

*David thus calls him Lord, so how is he his son?”*

*And in the hearing of all the people he said to his disciples, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”*

Jesus has just solved the Sadducees’ “seven brothers with one wife” riddle, and the scribes are dumbstruck by His answer. Now it’s His turn to pose one to them.

But where’s He going with this? Previously, Luke went into great detail to show that Jesus is David’s son. Why is Jesus now contradicting that?

He’s not; He’s just playing “stump the scribes.” They’re all familiar with Psalm 110:1, where David said, “*The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’*” This messianic psalm declares that the Christ will sit at the right hand of the LORD.

But the father is traditionally viewed as greater than his offspring. So then how can the Christ, being David’s son, be greater than David?

Of course, there’s no real contradiction. The Christ is greater than David, and the rule about fathers being greater than their sons isn’t an absolute. There are plenty of exceptions. Jesus is really God’s son anyway.

But the important thing here is that He stumps the scribes. Everyone can see that they aren’t the experts they claim to be.

With that established, Jesus turns to the crowd and explains how the scribes are just poseurs. Then he says, “*They will receive the greater condemnation.*”

This is an “emperor’s new clothes” moment for the scribes. They must be glowing with embarrassment.

The scribes were a prideful bunch. Jesus really brought them low, and they’re not going to take it well. But any time you see sin in another, check the mirror. We all need our pride exposed.

This can get painful, but the “no pain, no gain” rule applies here. It’s the pride that makes it painful. Ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of your pride—and brace yourself for the response.

Ask the Lord to show you where you are like the scribes, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees.

4 Luke 21:1–4 (ESV)

*Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. And he said, “Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”*

God doesn't need the money.

When we give to a ministry, we often think about helping or increasing that ministry. Thus, fundraising banquets tend to highlight the impact our contributions will make on the people we're trying to help.

That's why it's important to recruit as well as fundraise at those banquets. Different people have different resources. *For the body does not consist of one member but of many.* (1 Corinthians 12:14) All gifts are precious, but time is more precious than money.

But what is the widow thinking? How could she think her two coins would have any impact?

Yet, *she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.* What's going on here?

The widow has just tossed her trust in her own resources into the box. All she has left is God. She will live or die based on His provision.

This turns the whole concept of impact on its head. Jesus commends the widow's offering, not for the impact it will have on the temple, but for the impact it will have on her.

*“Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them.”*

This is why time is more important than money. People can give money that they won't miss, but every minute is precious.

And when you actually do charity, you lay your heart on the altar. You don't know what's going to happen next, and you don't know how it's going to affect you.

Like the widow, you have to trust God.

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In the spirit of the Good Samaritan, we are called to have compassion for our neighbors. Some of that is what we do, but it's also about how we feel. Since we have been forgiven much, we should love much.

*“For the operation of the grace of God is such, that when it comes into our hearts with forgiveness it makes us merciful.”* — Martyn Lloyd-Jones “Studies in the Sermon on the Mount”

Ask the Lord for a more merciful heart. Consider your own countless sins. HmMMM. God's mercies must be never-ending.

Ask the Holy Spirit to seize upon that to soften your attitude and make you more sympathetic to the plight of others.

5 Luke 21:5–9 (ESV)

*And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, “As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.” And they asked him, “Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?” And he said, “See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is at hand!’ Do not go after them. And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once.”*

This passage introduces the Olivet Discourse. (See also Matthew 24:1–44 and Mark 13:1–36.) But notice how it begins. This doesn’t start out as a sermon but as a reply. Recall that Jesus has just pointed out how the widow’s two coins were a greater offering than what the rich contributed from their abundance.

But some folks don’t get it and start bragging about the temple’s fancy construction. Jesus pops their bubble with, *“As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”* As they used to say in cellphone commercials, “Can you hear me now?”

Apparently, they can, because they ask, *“Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?”* Jesus could have started His reply with, “Now that I’ve got your attention ...” He has a lot to say and He’ll take the rest of Chapter 21 to say it.

But they’ve asked the wrong question. They ask, *“When will these things be?”* Why? So you can call your bookie? How about asking why these things will happen, or what you should do?

Jesus pretty much ignores their questions and turns this into a teaching moment. Because of that, commentators disagree about what comes next.

In today’s passage, He starts telling them what will not be a *sign when these things are about to take place*. These warnings are very important and still current.

*“See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is at hand!’ Do not go after them. And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once.”*

That last bit is crucial. Other translations say that the end will not be immediately or right away.

Two thousand years later, at least we get that part.

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When we give thanks to the Lord for His many blessings, we should also include our trials. Those can be the biggest blessings, though it often takes a while to see how.

Look for connections between your blessings and your trials. In retrospect, they can be amazingly coordinated. God’s hand in orchestrating these events can be obvious.

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. How can this country get back to its Christian roots?
2. Do you fear demons? What do you do about it?
3. How can you strive to do excellent work without becoming prideful when you do well?
4. What have you learned from doing charity?
5. What trials have you had or seen that turned out to be blessings?