

Tuesday

Matthew 21:18—25:46; Mark 11:20—13:37;
Luke 20; 21; John 12:20—50

“Then they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Him in order to trap Him in a statement” (Mark 12:13).

Of all the days recorded in the Scriptures, Tuesday was the busiest day in the life of Christ. When He had cleansed the temple, He hit the Jewish leaders in their pocketbooks. This got their attention. The Jewish leaders had made a “robbers’ den” out of the temple.

They became angry with Jesus and asked, “Where did You get Your authority?”; “Who are You?”; “Who do You think You are?” They thought they could quickly run this Galilean out of town. If He answered them by saying, “God,” He lost, for they would charge Him with blasphemy. If He answered them by saying, “Man,” He still lost, for they would say He had no right to do what He had done. However, Jesus turned the situation around by asking, “Where did John get his authority?” Jesus fought fire with fire. They refused to answer Him, so Jesus did not answer them! (See Matthew 21:23–27; Mark 11:27–33; Luke 20:1–8.) The Jewish leaders tried to demean Jesus by asking for His credentials: “Where did You go to school?

You are not a priest, an ordained rabbi, or a graduate of Jerusalem Seminary.” They soon found out that He was “The Great Debater.” He exposed their foolishness.

LESSONS IN PARABLES

Jesus taught three parables in this context. The apostles asked Jesus why He taught in parables and what He meant (Matthew 13:10, 36). He said that this practice eliminated those who were merely curious from being among His followers. Parables are not “children’s stories.” They gently guide you into convicting yourself.

Jesus first presented a parable of two sons, illustrating what repentance is (Matthew 21:28–32). One son refused to obey his father and then repented and obeyed, while the other told his father he would obey but later did not. Publicans (or tax collectors) and harlots will enter into God’s presence when some “religious folk” will not. Publicans and harlots did not crucify Jesus. This was done by God’s nation, Israel. Jerusalem was God’s city. Inside Jerusalem was God’s temple, but just outside the city walls Jesus would soon be crucified. It is shocking to see how vicious, blind, proud, and prejudiced religionists can be.

Next, Jesus told a parable of wicked renters who killed the landlord’s son, illustrating how He would be rejected (Matthew 21:33–44; Mark 12:1–12; Luke 20:9–19). He spoke of the stone that could have saved Israel but was cast aside. The Jewish leaders knew that Jesus was talking about them and Himself.

He told a parable of a marriage feast, showing how some would reject His invitation (Matthew 22:2–14; Luke 14:16–24). Relatives and friends not only rejected the invitation, but they even used the occasion for murderous sport. The king who was having the wedding for his son

was furious and said, “Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast” (Matthew 22:9). When the privileged shut themselves out, the common were invited. No wonder the common people heard Jesus gladly (Mark 12:37).

DEBATES BEGIN

Soon the Pharisees and the Herodians¹ came together to entangle Jesus in His words. The Pharisees hated the Herodians and believed they were traitors—but they hated Jesus more. The two groups presented a trick question to Jesus: “What about the poll tax?” Jesus, holding a coin, said, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21). This shocked them into silence.

When the Sadducees² came to Him, they only offered silliness. Jesus was direct with them. He said, “You don’t know the Scriptures” and “You don’t know the power of God” (Matthew 22:29; Mark 12:24).

The persistent Pharisees returned with a lawyer, who asked, “What is the greatest command?” Jesus answered, “Love God foremost,” and then added the second greatest command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” His answer silenced the lawyer. (See Matthew 22:34–40; Mark 12:28–34.)

Jesus then asked them who the Messiah really was. They gave no response. At this point, the debates ended. (See Matthew 22:41–46; Mark 12:35–37; Luke 20:41–44.)

¹Perhaps the most influential Jewish religious leaders in Jesus’ day, the Pharisees were characterized as self-righteous and legalistic. The Herodians were a political group dedicated to increasing the power of Herod’s family in Palestine.

²The Sadducees were wealthy aristocrats, many of whom were priests. They hated Jesus because He threatened their authority.

A POINTED SERMON

Following all of this, Jesus preached the most scathing sermon in the Scriptures (Matthew 23). He called the Jewish leaders “snakes” and “blind guides.” He pronounced seven woes, branding them “hypocrites.” “How can you escape the condemnation of hell?” He asked them. Then He cried, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . ! How often I wanted to gather your children together, . . . and you were unwilling” (Matthew 23:37; see Luke 13:34).

PROPHECY AND PREACHING

As they walked away from the temple, His disciples asked Jesus three questions about the fall of the temple: “When will these things be?”; “What will be the sign of Your coming?”; “When is the end of the age?” Jesus dealt with these questions in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. In other words, He was still teaching.

Here we read of “the widow with the two mites” who gave all she had to God (Mark 12:41–44; Luke 21:1–4). Amidst all the hypocrisy, God sent this humble widow to remind all people for all time what true giving to God actually is! What a God!

Trouble was ahead! In spite of the crowds and the critics, Jesus taught His disciples three more profound parables: a parable of ten virgins, emphasizing preparedness; a parable of talents, stressing responsibility; and a parable of sheep and goats, picturing the judgment (Matthew 25). No servant of God ever preached as Jesus did that day, but His preaching fell on deaf ears.

What a day!

*The cross . . .
there is no other way!*