

Luke 20

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon explores the authority of Christ, the parable of the husbandmen, the resurrection, and the humility of Christ, highlighting the moral blessedness of humility and the church's place in relation to Christ.

Scripture: Luke 20:1

Topics: "Authority of Christ", "Humility and Exaltation"

Description

John Nelson Darby discusses the authority of Christ as questioned by the scribes, emphasizing that true faith relies solely on God's word without needing external validation. He explains the parable of the husbandmen, illustrating Israel's rejection of Christ and the consequences of that rejection, while also addressing the complexities of tribute to Caesar and the resurrection of the saints. Darby highlights the distinction between the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous, affirming that believers are children of God and will be raised to eternal life. He concludes by stressing the importance of humility, as exemplified by Christ, and the believer's union with Him in glory, which is foundational to understanding their identity and inheritance in Christ.

Transcript

The first question raised was by the scribes, as to the authority of Christ and its source. Jesus questions them about the baptism of John: Was it from heaven or of man? They reasoned without conscience. They owned their incompetency, rather than acknowledge His Messiahship. The simple child of God receives the word as certainly as Christ gives it. Reliance on God's word is the only sure ground. How can you be certain? God has said it. If God's speaking requires proof, I must have something more sure and true than God. Is the church? Alas! alas! . . . If God cannot speak so as to claim authority, without another to accredit what He says, there is no such thing as faith.

The parable of the husbandmen (v. 9-18) sets forth the Lord's dealings with Israel, to whom the vineyard was first let, and, upon the rejection of "the Heir," the gift of it to others. Nor was this all. The rejected stone becomes the head of the corner. Whosoever fell on that stone should be broken; but on whomsoever it fell, utter destruction would be the result. The past sins of Jerusalem illustrate the first; for the second we must wait for the execution of judgment when the Lord appears.

Verse 19. The question of tribute to Caesar was very subtle. They used the effect of their own wickedness to tempt the Lord. Abstractedly the Jews ought not to have been subject to the Gentiles. And, moreover, the Messiah was come, the Deliverer of Israel. If He said, Obey the Gentiles, where was His delivering

power? If He said, Rebel, they would have had an excuse to deliver Him to Pilate. Because of Israel's sin, God has broken down the key-stone of nations, and given power to the Gentile. The Jew has been rebellious under the sentence, and ever craving deliverance from their thralldom. But the Lord answered with divine wisdom. He put them exactly in the place where their sin had put them: Caesar's things are to be rendered to Caesar, and God's things to God.

165 After settling the question as to this world between God and the people, He next meets the Sadducean or sceptical difficulty as to the next world; verses 27-38. The Lord shews the place of the risen saints in entire contrast with the world. The idea of a general resurrection is set aside. If all rise together, there is uncertainty, a common judgment, etc.; but if the saints are raised by themselves because they are children of God, leaving the rest of the dead for another and distinctive resurrection - a resurrection of judgment, all is changed. No passage of scripture speaks of both rising together. The resurrection is that which most of all distinguishes, and this for ever. It is the grand testimony to the difference between good and bad. The saint will be raised because of the Spirit of Christ that dwells in him - the application to his body of that power of life in Christ which has already quickened his soul. It is a resurrection from among the dead, as was Christ's. So here, "they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that age," for such it is, "and the resurrection from the dead." "They are equal to the angels, and are the children of God." Luke adds another characteristic point omitted elsewhere; "all live unto him." It is the present blessed living unto God of those who have died, and await the resurrection from among the dead.

Then in verses 41-44 the Lord puts His question, How is David's Son, David's Lord? This was just what the Jews could not understand. It was the hinge on which turned the change in the whole moral system. He had taken the place of the holy dependent One, a pilgrim as others, and He had drunk of the brook by the way. He was going on in meekness and quietness, but living by the refreshments which came from God His Father. Thus having emptied Himself, humbled Himself, He is now exalted by God. This great universal principle, "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased," is fully exemplified in the two Adams. The first Adam, man's nature, would exalt itself to be "as God," until in its full ripeness Antichrist will exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped.

166 Satan tempted man at the beginning to make himself like God, and at the end God shall send them strong delusion to believe a lie. Satan, not being able to exalt himself in heaven, will attempt to do it through the seed of man; but in the end shall be abased; Isaiah 14:12-15. In the last Adam we have Him who was God humbling Himself, going down, becoming obedient unto death, even the vilest, and then we see that humbled One going back to the place of power at God's right hand, but as man as well as God. God highly exalted Him, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. Having been obedient all through, in humiliation, He is exalted to be David's Lord. This took Him out of the line of Jewish promises, though as David's Son of course He had them.

The Jews did not understand the Scriptures, and fulfilled them through not understanding them. God's ways have gone on through all, manifesting His grace and patience towards man. He placed man on the earth, and then sent law, prophets, etc., until man gets to the end in rejecting all. God tries man and then brings in the new man, who is the fulfilment of all His blessed counsels - the second Man. Then He takes up the last Adam as the heavenly man into a heavenly place and all now depends not on the responsibility of man, but on the stability of God. Life, righteousness, and glory descend from heaven. Is it life that is needed? God gives the life of Christ in resurrection. Is it righteousness? It is a divine righteousness that God gives. Is it a kingdom? It is the kingdom of heaven. All flows down not simply from God in grace, but from the place which man has in glory, from the counsels of God about the heavenly man in glory. He has

first taken Him up, and thence the blessing flows down. The man Christ Jesus has fully met all man's responsibilities. This is the reason of the fulness of the blessing of the gospel, and also that of the kingdom to come. The gospel is the power of God, and the kingdom is to be set up in heaven. The king is gone into the far country; and when He returns, it will be to bring in the kingdom of heaven. All the counsels of God now take their centre and seat in heaven. Thus, in the largest way, the turning-point in all the plans and counsels of God is Jesus being set at the right hand of God. All the character, the stability, and the perfectness of our blessing takes its source from the exalted Jesus. The character of it is heavenly; the stability is what God has done; and the righteousness that fits me for it is God's.

167 The Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost, has come down to bear witness to Him, on whom peace of the soul rests, even on the accomplished righteousness of Him who is taken up into glory. His office is to work within, and make us down here manifest what God is. All this we have as the result of Christ, instead of accomplishing the promises as David's Son, bringing them in as David's Lord.

Mark the moral blessedness of this general principle: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Christ humbled Himself - not was humbled, that is another thing. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." That is what we are to do - take the lowest place. We cannot do this till we are Christians; but it is our glory to take the lowest, and hear Him say, "Come up higher." "He hath left us an example that we should follow his steps." The Lord Jesus has been rejected as David's Son; He will come forth as David's Lord.

Now, while He is thus hidden, we see the church's place. We are "hid with Christ in God," and have our portion by faith, as united to Him, while He is out of sight. The Holy Ghost, having come down, gives us a place as associated with Him in all the blessedness of the Father's house, and in all the glory which He has to be displayed by-and-by.

The place of Eve was one of union with Adam in the dominion over all things; Genesis 1:26-28; 5:2. We find the church in the display of Christ's glory, only as by grace, the bride and companion of Christ, never as part of the inheritance. Viewed even individually, we are "joint-heirs with Christ." It is of the last importance to the saints in these days to apprehend the distinct place which we have, as one with Christ, the heavenly Man.

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