

The Gospel of Luke

Luke 19:28-21:38

Jesus' Ministry in Jerusalem (19:28-21:38)

Jesus arrival in Jerusalem is an occasion to celebrate the arrival of the King. However, as the king finds the city in a state of rebellion to its rightful God and king, he laments. The primary movement in the structure of this section is summarized as follows:

Welcome → Lament → Warning → Rejection → Judgment

The prophetic action of warning in the temple leads to an increased confrontation and rejection with the Jewish leadership culminating with a prophetic oracle of judgment on the Temple and Jerusalem. The followers of Jesus are warned to be watchful and mindful of the judgment of the Son of Man on Jerusalem which will usher in the "times of the Gentiles" (21:24).

Structure

Jesus' Ministry in Jerusalem	(19:28-21:38)
Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem	(19:28-47)
Teaching in the Temple and Growing Hostility to Jesus	(20:1-21:4)
The Coming Devastation	(21:5-38)

Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem (19:28-47)

The prior section, the Travel Narrative, ends with the Parable of the Minas (19:11-27)-- a story of a hostile citizenry rejecting its king out of hatred. The arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem reveals the parable to be a reality.

The Triumphal Entry (19:28-40)

The choreography enacted by Jesus and his disciples all points to prophecies in the Old Testament describing the Messiah's entrance into Jerusalem:

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
righteous and having salvation is he,
humble and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey. –Zechariah 9:9*

The symbolism is not lost on the Jewish leadership, only they reject its application to Jesus. As the disciples cry out, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" Some Pharisees reply, "Teacher rebuke your disciples." (19:39)

Jesus responds: “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out” (19:40). This clearly resonates with a warning from the beginning of Jesus’ ministry where John the Baptist warned about the sin of presumption on Jewish heritage:

⁸ Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ⁹ Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” –Luke 3:8-9

The Lord will be praised and exalted, the question is who will be the ones to do it.

Jesus weeps over the city and its future (19:41-44)

The heart of Jesus is for the Jewish welcome and reception of its God and Messiah. But Jesus only finds occasion to lament. The entirety of the Zechariah 9 prophecy is one where YHWH comes to save his people. However the rejection of God on the day of his visitation, results in judgment for Jerusalem and its leaders.

The Cleansing of the Temple (19:45-47)

The first place the King/YHWH is to come once he enters Jerusalem is to the Temple:

Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the LORD whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.
–Malachi 3:1

His coming was prophesied to be one of purification:

Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts.
–Malachi 3:5

That Judgment is first symbolically enacted judgment by over turning the tables of the Temple. The indictment is stinging: “My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers.” (19:46) The original purpose of Temple was to be a place where the people and the nations could come and find healing, salvation and reconciliation with the one true God. The present leaders of Jerusalem and Israel had made it a house of thieves and insurrectionists. Needless to say those leaders did not heed the prophetic warning, but rather hardened in their resolve to “destroy” Jesus. (19:47)

Teaching in the Temple and growing hostility to Jesus (20:1-21:4)

Jesus teachings and actions in the Temple became a flash point for confrontations with those very leaders. They questioned his authority and he revealed their lack of authority! (20:1-8)

Parable of the Vineyard: Rejecting the Cornerstone (20:9-19)

The parable of the vineyard is a story about the rejection of the servants of the vineyard by its stewards culminating with the rejection of the “Son” of the owner of the Vineyard. The key to understanding the story is in recognizing that YHWH is the owner and Israel’s leaders are the tenants. Prophet after prophet has been rejected but in these last days, God sent his Son the heir of the Kingdom. The rejection and murder of the Son by the tenants should require the ejection of the wicked tenants but the leadership replies: “Surely Not!”

Jesus then uses a proverb from Psalm 118:8 to bring home the point. There is a play on words with the original Aramaic which Jesus spoke. The Aramaic word for son is ‘ben’ and stone is ‘eben’. In rejecting the Son, the leaders of Israel have rejected the Stone. In spite of their rebellion and rejection, YHWH has made the Stone/Son the chief cornerstone. Jesus has interpreted this proverb from the Psalm to be a prophecy of his Resurrection and Ascension in the face of utter rejection by the Jewish leaders (builders/tenants).

Trick Questions: Paying Taxes to Caesar (20:20-26)

The question about paying taxes to Caesar was an attempt to trap Jesus in order to either discredit him with the people or get him in trouble with the Roman authorities for rebellion. Jesus masterfully evades the trap and makes a profound theological point. The key to understanding his point is in the word “image”. The image on the Coin is Caesars. (20:24)

Jesus says, “Then render under to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God the things that are God’s.” (20:25) The implication being that if things with Caesar’s image belong to Caesar, then things with God’s image belong to God. God’s image is born on our personhood. (Genesis 1:28) We may owe Caesar some coins, we owe God our lives.

More Dishonest Questions: The Resurrection (20:27-40)

The question regarding marriage asked by the Sadducees is really a trap to show Jesus’ teaching on the Resurrection of the body to be a practical impossibility. Jesus uses the question and occasion to reveal two types of people:

The sons	Of this age	Marry and consent to marriage
Those considered worthy	To attain to that age and	Neither marry nor are given in marriage nor can they die any more, for they are like angels;
	and the resurrection from the dead	Because they are equal to angels, they are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

The levirate marriage laws were concerned about the persistence of name, inheritance and title through progeny. This is a concern of the people of “this age” rather than “that age”. Those of this age are concerned with matters of honor, debt and reciprocity. Those of the age to come have an eternal focus that is not self centered in tribal inheritance but in divine inheritance. They are “sons of God”. The call is to “live for him”. (20:39)

Is the Messiah a Son of David? (20:41-44)

Jesus question back to the Jewish leadership is a Christological riddle. If David in the Psalms calls the Messiah, “Lord” then “How is he his son?” The implication is that the Messiah is not only the Son of David but YHWH in the flesh!

The Dangers of Pride and Self-Righteousness (20:45-21:4)

Luke then tells how Jesus warns against the Jewish leaders and their hypocrisy. (20:45-47) The key to being a faithful disciple is in being “all in” like the widow who put in the Temple treasury “all that she had to live on”. The entire section underscores the reality that the Jewish leadership gave token lip service to YHWH and thus missed the Messiah/YHWH on the day of visitation. They did not give YHWH his image back, they did not “live for him”; they did not “put in all” they had. Therefore they would undergo judgment.

The coming devastation (21:5-38)

The final section in Jesus’ ministry in Jerusalem is a prophecy of judgment on Jerusalem and the Temple.

Structure

Destruction of the Temple foreseen (21:5-6)

Signs and Portents (21:7-11)

Persecution and Endurance (21:12-19)

The devastation of Jerusalem (21:20-24)

The Coming of the Son of Man 21:25-33

A Call to Vigilance and Prayer 21:34-36

Teaching in the Temple (narrative transition to the Passion narratives) 21:37-38

Destruction of the Temple

As Jesus indicated in the Parable of the Vineyard, a new Chief Cornerstone was to be laid. In order for that new Temple to begin construction the old one must be destroyed.

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.” –Luke 21:5-6

The question the disciples raise is “When?” Jesus describes many signs and portents that will accompany the siege of Jerusalem and its destruction. He warns his disciples of their coming persecution and their

need for endurance and graphically describes the fall of Jerusalem and coming of the “times of the Gentiles.”

The key teaching for Jesus disciples and Luke’s readers is to be watchful and ready for coming judgment. Jesus words are certain. Many will disbelieve him and fail to take his warnings seriously. But those who are paying attention will not get caught up in the “dissipation and drunkenness and the cares of this life” but rather they are called to:

But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.

—Luke 21:36

In our day, do we take the warnings of Jesus seriously? Are we mindful that the offer of salvation also comes with a call to repentance? Do we heed the call to offer ourselves completely and totally to Jesus? Or are we too caught up with the cares of this age?