

# Lent 2020 - "The Politics of the Passion"

## Wednesday March 25 Bible Study

"Politics" defined: *"the activities associated with the governance of a country or other area, especially the debate or conflict among individuals or parties having or hoping to achieve power."*

- 1) Most citizens in our day regard "politics" and "politicians" with distaste – at best
- 2) "Politics" is governed by the devil's platitude that *"the ends justifies the means"*
- 3) As such, it is widely accepted as a license to sin
  - a. Politicians routinely justify sinful conduct as necessary for the greater good (their power)
  - b. Whatever is therefore necessary for the acquisition and holding of power becomes acceptable
- 4) Politics is as old as civilization, and therefore also played a key role in our Savior's Passion
- 5) Our goal this Lenten Season is to:
  - a. Gain a better understanding of the historical context of our Lord's passion
  - b. Better understand the sinful mindset and motives of Jesus' enemies – then and now
  - c. Learn to recognize and apply the lessons of the past to our daily Christian walk and outreach

**ESV(Luke 20:41-21:9)** *But he said to them, "How can they say that the Christ is David's son? <sup>42</sup> For David himself says in the Book of Psalms, "'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, <sup>43</sup> until I make your enemies your footstool.'" <sup>44</sup> David thus calls him Lord, so how is he his son?" <sup>45</sup> And in the hearing of all the people he said to his disciples, <sup>46</sup> "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, <sup>47</sup> who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation." <sup>ESV</sup> Luke 21:1 Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, <sup>2</sup> and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. <sup>3</sup> And he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. <sup>4</sup> For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on." <sup>5</sup> And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, <sup>6</sup> "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." <sup>7</sup> And they asked him, "Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?" <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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."*

- 1) This dialog also took place on the Tuesday of Holy Week, and follows on from our previous study and the three previous attacks ("By what authority," "Is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar," and the resurrection challenge by the Sadducees)
- 2) Having silenced the Sadducees, Jesus here turns his attention to their rivals, the scribes and Pharisees
  - a. The scribes were gloating over the fact that "the Sadducees got theirs"
  - b. In effect, Jesus turns to them and says, *"And as for you..."*
- 3) Luke includes only the bare essentials of all that Jesus spoke on this occasion
  - a. Matthew 23 offers a more complete transcript (the "Woe unto you" condemnations of the scribes and Pharisees)
- 4) Jesus' rebuke is directed at the fact that the scribes and Pharisees were looking for a different kind of Messiah than the One promised by God
  - a. Believing they had no sin to forgive, they were looking for a *human* "messiah" – and *only* a human messiah
  - b. The very concept of a "Savior from sin and hell" was an affront to them, an insult
    - i. They believed they had no sin, and therefore had no need of forgiveness
    - ii. Since they believed they had no guilt, they had no fear of hell
- 5) Jesus' entire point (verses 41-44) is based on a single passage in the Old Testament (Psalm 110:1)

**ESV(Psalm 110:1-4)** *The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." <sup>2</sup> The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! <sup>3</sup> Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning,*

the dew of your youth will be yours. <sup>4</sup> The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

- 6) A better translation: "Jehovah (Yahweh) said to my Lord..."
- 7) The scribes and Pharisees believed that the Messiah would come from David's line, but that he would be only human
- 8) Basing his argument on David's own words, the question Jesus asks is, "*Since David calls the Messiah 'Lord,' how can you claim that he is only a human descendant?*"
- 9) In reality, Jesus has created yet another impossible question for his enemies
  - a. They couldn't deny that the Messiah would be David's son
  - b. Nor could they deny David's own words that his son would also be his Lord
  - c. Since the only possible conclusion was that the Messiah was to be *both* David's son and David's Lord (true man and true God) again they could (would) give Jesus no answer
- 10) A broader application of Jesus' argument here is the fact that he based his answer on a single passage from the Old Testament
  - a. This validates not only the doctrine of verbal inspiration, but the importance of *every* doctrine
  - b. Jesus gave us another example in John 10:

<sup>ESV</sup> **(John 10:33-36)** The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God." <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'? <sup>35</sup> If he called them gods to whom the word of God came-- and Scripture cannot be broken-- <sup>36</sup> do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"

- 11) Having again confounded them, Jesus turns to his disciples and warns them of the superficial, self-serving, false piety of the scribes and Pharisees
  - a. Their piety was all on the outside, carried out in a way guaranteed to be noticed and praised by society
  - b. Many more examples of their superficiality and hypocrisy are included in Matthew 23
- 12) Jesus then used the example of the widow and her humble offering as an example of true piety
- 13) In the next section of our text (21:5-6) Jesus uses the impending destruction of the temple as an object lesson: everything temporal is fleeting
  - a. As the temple will come to nothing, so man's hypocritical outward show of piety will come to nothing
- 14) The last verses of our text certainly have added meaning and application in our current circumstances
  - a. Human beings have always (and will always) point to every calamity as a harbinger of the end of the world
  - b. Many Christians seek to find Biblical reference to every earthly catastrophe
  - c. No single event will foretell Jesus' Second Coming
  - d. The goal of every Christian is not to try to tie every earthly event to a specific Bible prophecy, but to use every hardship as a reminder of the temporary nature of this world, and to remain ready at all times for our Savior's return

## Lessons

- 1) Our confidence in the verbal inspiration of every part of God's Word is critical
- 2) There are no unimportant doctrines, just as there are no unimportant (or false) words
- 3) Christians can *easily* slide into a superficial religiosity
- 4) Generosity that is pure is always both intentionally anonymous and lovingly gratuitous
- 5) God-pleasing actions flow naturally from the truly humble heart