

Gospel of Luke: Places of Honour (Luke 20:41-47)

March 3, 2024 • Luke Knight

The Scene

Recently we've seen Jesus ride into Jerusalem like a king in authority, teach in the Temple, be challenged by the Temple elite, and best them in multiple debates or traps they set. Luke tells us the higher-ups want to kill Jesus. Jesus' authority and identity is being revealed, scene by scene.

Most recently Jesus has spoken in authority about Israel, the powers at be in Jerusalem at the time (Rome), and the resurrection. The response to Jesus' wisdom and authority cause those who challenge him to fall silent.

Luke 20:41-44

Having been questioned and challenged by the Temple elite, Jesus now turns a question on them. His question cites Psalm 110 and draws together Messianic expectations with who he might actually be.

Jesus' question about the sonship and lordship of the Messiah shines a dramatic spotlight on him in this moment. Is Jesus more than a Messiah?

Luke 20:45-47

Following this stunning question, Luke tells us that Jesus turned to his disciples (with the people listening) and tells them to beware the Temple higher-ups and how they do power.

Given the previous episodes, we are seeing Jesus pronounce further judgement, and now added warning, about these men. It appears they have chosen idolatry, greed, and power games over submission to YHWH (Israel's one God). If Jesus is Israel's God come among his people, then the Temple higher-ups very challenge and judgement of Jesus will become a judgement on themselves.

Implications for Jesus' followers today

It's important to understand what Luke is making dramatically clear in his biography of Jesus. Jesus is more than teacher, healer, friend, Messiah. With the cross and resurrection ahead in the narrative (the definitive picture of God's power and authority in Jesus), Jesus is being revealed as more. His authority, over every sphere he enters, reveals his identity.

The phrase "Jesus said to his disciples..." in this episode is telling of the first audience hearing Luke's gospel. If Jesus holds true Godly authority, and his followers are to sit under his authority, they must consider how Jesus' does power as opposed to how the Temple elite. If we don't see Jesus in his true light and submit to his authority, we'll submit to other authorities (idolatry, ultimately), and that will lead us to evil and unjust uses of power.

Those who give oversight to these new Christian communities should be especially diligent in their submission to Jesus and how they handle power if they are to avoid the mistakes of the Temple elite and being dealt with "most severely".

We should skip ahead to see how Jesus does power, especially his words later in Luke 22, "I am among you as one who serves..."

Discussion Questions:

- What are you learning about Jesus as we read these passages?
- What are you learning about the other characters in these passages?
- What are you learning about the first listeners of this gospel (the first Christian communities)?
- What are you learning about yourself, considering who Jesus is said to be, especially in your relationship to power and authority?
- Who has been a good example of Christian power and authority in your life, and what did that look like? What does doing power wrong look like?
- What about this passage encourages, inspires, or challenges you?