

Script, Pastor Frank R. Johnson

*Jesus!*

*“Road to the Cross, #6:  
Questioning the Person and Work of Jesus (II)”  
(Luke 20:27-21:4)*

*Take a first look.*

I. Time was running out. Jesus had less than a week before He would be violently attacked, falsely accused and condemned, and then finally sentenced unjustly to death by crucifixion. The road to the cross was becoming narrow and treacherous.

II. Jesus was resolute. He had set His face toward the fulfillment of His mission. He would lay down His life for the sin and evil of the entire human race. He would not be deterred, however many might try to dissuade or counter His purposes.

III. They came and plied Him with questions, not the questions of the earnest seekers but the questions of the cynics who only wished to show Him to be false and then to discredit Him. We join Luke in his description of these attacks.

*Take a closer look at Luke 20:27-21:4.*

**I. A QUESTION OF RESURRECTION LIFE. 20:27-40**

1. *Some Sadducees asked Jesus a question regarding marriage in the Resurrection, even though they disbelieved in resurrection.* If the Pharisees represented the most conservative party among the Jews of Jesus' time, the Sadducees represented the liberals. There were a number of things they did not believe, including teaching about the Resurrection. They were motivated to trap Jesus, just as the other questioners were. Luke tells us plainly that these men had no interest in learning about the Resurrection, since they already had their minds made up about it. They simply wanted to show how logically inconsistent they thought the whole idea was, and to demonstrate that Jesus didn't know what He was talking about. Their case study about marriage was unanswerable from their point of view. That is, it was unanswerable as long as their assumptions were correct.

2. *Jesus' answer gave important emphasis to the nature of the Resurrection as well as to believers' relationship with God.* Not only did He correct the false assumptions of the Sadducees about the Scriptures, He corrected their false assumptions about the state of existence in the Resurrection. They had not really read their Bibles as closely as they pretended. People who are “worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead” will be like the angels. They will not be able to die, and they will “neither marry nor be given in marriage.”

The relationship they have with their Creator will be one of Father-to-child, a close and personal familial relationship. As Jesus closed this teaching, even some of the “teachers of the law” (who were most likely Pharisees) could not help themselves; they even applauded Jesus' answer to their religious opponents, the Sadducees. “Well said, teacher!” they responded.

**Insight: Our hope for the future, including the certainty of the Resurrection, is based on what God has revealed through Christ.**

**I—“Philip Yancey describes a unique funeral custom conducted by African Muslims.**

Close family and friends circle the casket and quietly gaze at the corpse. No singing. No flowers. No tears.

“A peppermint candy is passed to everyone. At a signal, each one puts the candy in his or her mouth. When the candy is gone, each participant is reminded that life for this person is over. They believe life simply dissolves.”<sup>1</sup>

This is not the truth, although this is just about what the Sadducees believed. When you die, you just die. But my friends, this is not the case! Those who die in rebellion against God will enter the second death. This is *hell*. It is to be avoided at all costs. But those who die as children of God, because they have put their faith in God’s Son, Jesus Christ, will live! “Because I live, you also will live,” said Jesus Christ to His followers (John 14:19, NIV).

In that same book (the first edition from 1977) by Philip Yancey, he tells a story of Dr. Paul Brand when Dr. Brand was a surgeon helping leprosy patients in Valore, India. Leprosy is better known as Hansen’s Disease, a disease that attacks the nerve endings keeping the victim from feeling pain. Dr. Brand was known as one of the few people who would touch or closely associate with people who had Hansen’s Disease. The townspeople would quarantine them.

Yancey recounts a visit Dr. Brand made to a patients’ gathering: “The air was heavy with combined odors of crowding bodies, poverty, stale spices, treated bandages.

“The patients insisted on a few words from Dr. Brand, and he reluctantly agreed. He stood for a moment, empty of ideas, looking at the patients before him. His eyes were drawn to their hands, dozens of them, most pulled inward in the familiar ‘leprosy claw-hand,’ some with no fingers some with a few stumps. Many patients sat on their hands or otherwise hid them from view.

“‘I am a hand surgeon,’ he began, and waited for the translation into Tamil and Hindi. ‘So when I meet people, I can’t help looking at their hands. The palmist claims he can tell your future by looking at your hands. I can tell your past. For instance, I can tell what your trade has been by the position of the callouses and the condition of the nails. I can tell a lot about your character; I love hands.’

He pauses and looks at the eager faces. ‘How I would love to have had the chance to meet Christ and study His hands! But knowing what He was like, I can almost picture them, feel them.’

He pauses again, then wondered aloud what it would have been like to meet Christ and study His hands. He traced the hands of Christ, beginning with infancy when His hands were small, helpless, futilely grasping. Then came the hands of the boy Jesus, clumsily holding a brush or stylus, trying to form letters of the alphabet. Then the hands of Christ the carpenter—rough, gnarled, with broken fingernails and bruises from working with a saw and hammer.

“Then there were the hands of Christ the physician, the healer. Compassion and sensitivity seemed to radiate from them, so much so that when He touched people, they could feel something of the divine spirit coming through. Christ touched the blind, the diseased, the needy.

“‘Then,’ continued Dr. Brand, ‘there were His crucified hands. It hurts me to think of a nail being driven through the center of my hand, because I know what goes on there, the tremendous complex of tendons and nerves and blood vessels and muscles. It’s impossible to drive a spike through its center without crippling it. The thought of those healing hands being crippled reminds me of what Christ was prepared to endure. In that act He identified Himself with all the deformed and crippled human beings in the world. Not only was He able to endure poverty with the poor, weariness with the tired, but—clawed hands with the crippled.’

“The effect on the listening patients, all social outcasts, was electrifying,” reports Yancey. “Jesus ... a cripple, with a claw-hand like theirs?

“Brand continued. ‘And then there were His resurrected hands. One of the things I find most astounding is that, though we think of the future life as something perfected, when Christ appeared to His disciples He said, “Come look at my hands,” and he invited Thomas to put his finger into the print of the nail. Why did He want to keep the wounds of His humanity? Wasn’t it because He

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Yancey, *Where Is God When It Hurts?* (Zondervan, 1997); submitted by Van Morris, Mount Washington, Kentucky, to Preaching Today.

wanted to carry back with Him an eternal reminder of the sufferings of those on earth? He carried the marks of suffering so He could continue to understand the needs of those suffering. He wanted to be forever one with us.'

Yancey concludes, "As he finished, Paul Brand was again conscious of hands as they were lifted, all over the courtyard, palm to palm in the Indian gesture of respect. *namaste*. The hands were the same stumps, the same missing fingers and crooked arches. Yet no one tried to hide them. They were held high, close to the face, in respect for Brand, but also with new pride and dignity. God's own response to suffering made theirs easier.

"T. S. Eliot wrote in one of his *Four Quartets* entitled "East Coker":

The wounded surgeon plies the steel  
That questions the distempered part;  
Beneath the bleeding hands we feel  
The sharp compassion of the healer's art  
Resolving the enigma of the fever chart."<sup>2</sup>

Behold the truth about the future and the hope of the human race! It is found in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the promised resurrection of all who belong to Him. This is what kind of God we have, and this is the hope He gives us.

## II. A QUESTION OF DAVID'S SON. 20:41-47

1. *Jesus turned the question to the religious leaders by asking how the Christ could be the Lord of David and the son of David at the same time.* The very ones who gave Him a sideways hurrah as He answered the Sadducees, are now in the sights of Jesus' moral and spiritual cannon. He draws His question from the Scriptures, Psalm 110:1, that says "The Lord said to my Lord; 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" The question was posed as a riddle: "David calls him 'Lord.' How can he be his son?" (vv. 42-44). The question was intended to make the people think farther back and further up than David when they drew their conclusions about the Messiah. They rightly considered the Messiah to be a descendant of David on the human side. They failed to recognize that He would be the Son of God, as well.

2. *Jesus then warned of the pretense and pride of "the teachers of the law."* They loved all the trappings of religious position and prestige, the formal greetings, the special robes, the places of honor. Jesus confronted them with their pretense. They made long prayers only to be heard by other people. They "devoured widows houses," meaning that they probably encouraged vulnerable and needy widows to give financially to support them while the widows themselves suffered from poverty. It is known that these men could not receive money for their teaching, but they could receive gifts from the people, which no doubt they encouraged as a pathway to God's blessing. "Such men will be punished most severely," Jesus declares. Their callous treatment of the needy, coupled with their proud self-elevation brought them under the judgment of God.

They were wrong, both about God and about themselves.

**Insight: Our theology and spiritual self-image must match what God has revealed to us in its fullness. We must understand both God and ourselves according to what God has revealed through Jesus Christ.**

**I—Wayne Cordeiro, one-time pastor of New Hope Christian Fellowship in O'ahu in Honolulu, Hawaii, told this story on himself:**

"Some time ago some wonderful people in our church gave Anna, my wife, and me a dinner certificate to a nice restaurant for \$100. We thought, Wow, a hundred bucks. Let's go for it. We found a free evening. We dressed up. I took a bath, used deodorant and cologne—the whole thing. I even

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<sup>2</sup> Philip Yancey, *Where Is God When It Hurts?* (Zondervan, 1977), pp. 163-65. T. S. Eliot, *The Four Quartets* (Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1943, 1977), p. 29.

washed and waxed my car, because we wanted to take it through the valet, and I didn't want my Ford Pinto to look bad. The night came, and we were excited.

"We went to this ritzy restaurant and walked in. They gave us a nice, candlelit table overlooking a lagoon adjacent to a moonlit bay there in Hawaii. Oh, it was nice. And we thought, for a hundred bucks for just the two of us, we could eat high on the hog. So we ordered the most expensive thing there. It was wonderful.

"When the bill came, I said, 'Honey, why don't you give me the certificate.'

"She said, 'I don't have the certificate. I thought you brought it.'

"I said, 'You have to have it. You're supposed to have it. You're the wife!'

"She said, 'I don't have it.' And I thought, We are in deep yogurt. Here we are. We look rich, we act rich, we even smell rich. But if we don't have that certificate, it invalidates everything."

Cordeiro draws the moral: "There are times in our lives when we can look holy, we can act holy, we can smell holy. But without a relationship with the Lord, we've forgotten something. It's relationship that validates everything else."<sup>3</sup>

That relationship assumes that we have the right idea about God and the right idea about ourselves. If we don't, we are just kidding ourselves, pretending without any reality behind it.

### III. A QUESTION OF CONTRASTS. 21:1-4

1. *Jesus pointed out the contrast between the giving of the rich and the giving of a "poor widow."* This fits very well with His indictment of the teachers of the law. The rich were able to give out of their abundance and hardly miss what they offered to God. In contrast, a simple widow put in "two copper coins" ("two lepta"). The *lepton* was a small Jewish coin (the only Jewish coin mentioned in the text of the New Testament, says Leon Morris). It was of very little value. That amount would hardly make a difference in the temple treasury, but this was not what Jesus noticed.

2. *He argued that she had "put in more than all the others," because she had given "all she had to live on."* It obviously wasn't more in sheer quantity. The more wealthy members of Jewish society surely gave more than two small copper coins. It was more in motivation and it was more in proportion to what she had. In fact, it was "all she had to live on." The rich had given God a (perhaps generous) *tip*. This woman had offered up *all* in her act of worship.

**Insight: Our gifts to God are measured by Him on a scale of motivation and proportion, not a scale of physical amount. He sees the heart-attitude behind our gifts and weighs the gift accordingly.**

**I—A pastor named Matthew Woodley wrote this confession in an edition of *Leadership journal* a few years ago.** He admits to learning the real motivation for giving of one's life and resources in service to God. Maybe you are not a pastor, but you can surely identify with his struggle to give what he thought he no longer had.

"Two years ago, I nearly ditched the pastorate. I started focusing on the negatives of my job: the Saturday-night sermon-anxiety attacks, a pitiful raise, the disintegrating basement tiles in the parsonage. After eight years of frantically meeting needs, pleasing people, and tracking down plant stands for weddings, I could identify only trace elements of spiritual growth in my congregation. A dangerous ice slowly spread throughout my heart—the ice of cynicism, the ice of pastoral sloth, an attitude that didn't care if people changed because, of course, they didn't want to, anyway.

"God didn't answer my prayer for escape. Instead, God resurrected the call to ministry during our family vacation to Libby, Montana.

"While I was reading and praying at an elementary school park, three children with bag lunches, dirty clothes, and dirt-streaked faces plopped themselves on the grass beside me. Before I could object or move, the oldest child launched into a complicated story of family dysfunction: 'Hi, my

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<sup>3</sup> Wayne Cordeiro, "A Personal Relationship," *Preaching Today* audio no. 225.

name is Deanna, and I'm 12; my sister is Kristy, and she's 10; and Mikey, my brother—doesn't he look fat in his Lion King T-shirt?—is 6. Actually, though, we all have different dads. My dad is dead; Kristy's dad disappeared; and Mikey's dad beats him up, so our mom is divorcing the creep. My mom and her fiancé, Larry, are at the casino because they need time alone, so she bought us all a barbecue burrito at the Town Pump and told us to stay in the park for two hours. Can we sit by you?'

"In order to be polite, I said yes, then asked if they lived in town.

"'No,' Deanna, the family spokesperson, answered again. 'We used to live in town, but my mom lost her job. I don't like living in a tent. By the way, what's your job?'

"'Well, I'm a pastor.'

"After a long silence, she asked, 'Mister Pastor, can you tell me something? I've heard stories about Jesus walking around healing people, loving people. Why doesn't he do that anymore?'

"I launched into a lecture on the Incarnation. Three children simply stared at me with big, love-hungry eyes. I looked at Deanna and Kristy, with their limp burritos, and fat, little, abused Mikey, with barbecue sauce smeared on his Lion King T-shirt.

"I stopped lecturing. With tears welling in my eyes, I said, 'Deanna, Kristy, Mikey, let me start over. Do you have any idea how much Jesus loves you right now?'

"How did God rebuild my call to ministry? He broke my heart again—with his love for these three children."<sup>4</sup>

Paul writes, "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again" 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, NIV).

### *Take it home.*

I. HAVE we found that great love that He has for us? We must receive it by faith, looking to the cross of Christ as we take Him into our hearts as our Savior and Lord.

II. HAVE we offered Him all we are and all we have, to be placed on the altar of worship?

III. HAVE we staked our hope on the historical resurrection of Jesus Christ and the promise that gives to those who believe in Him? "Because I live," Jesus said, "you also will live."

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<sup>4</sup> Mathew Woodley, "My Second Call to Ministry," *Leadership* (Winter 1998); submitted by Kevin A. Miller, Vice President, Christianity Today International.