

THE MAGNETISM OF JESUS

Luke 20:19–21:4

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Our Scripture today is from the Gospel of Luke, as we're continuing along in our study of Luke.

Luke 20:19 through 21:4. It's a Scripture that speaks to us of the magnetism of Jesus.

“The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people.

Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be honest. They hoped to catch

Jesus in something he said so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the

governor. So the spies questioned him, ‘Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth.

Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?’ He saw through their duplicity and said to them,

‘Show me a denarius. Whose portrait and inscription are on it?’ ‘Caesar’s,’ they replied. He said

to them, ‘Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God’s.’ They were unable to

trap him in what he had said there in public. And astonished by his answer, they became silent.

Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question.

‘Teacher,’ they said, ‘Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies and leaves a wife but no

children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother. Now there were seven

brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. The second and then the third

married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. Finally, the woman died

too. Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?’

Jesus replied, ‘The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are

considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither

THE MAGNETISM OF JESUS

Luke 20:19–21:4

marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection. But in the account of the bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the LORD "the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive.' Some of the teachers of the law responded, 'Well said, teacher!' And no one dared to ask him any more questions. Then Jesus said to them, 'How is it that they say the Christ is the Son of David? David himself declares in the Book of Psalms: "The LORD said to my LORD: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" David calls him "LORD." How then can he be his son?' While all the people were listening, Jesus said to his disciples, 'Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely.' As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 'I tell you the truth,' he said, 'this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on'" (Luke 20:19–21:4, NIV).

This is a day of questions for Jesus. It's the Tuesday of the last week, the week of his crucifixion. Various representatives from the leading elements of society are putting test questions to Him as He teaches in the public places on the Temple Mount.

A few weeks ago, Jewel and I were in Jerusalem, walking up the bazaar in the early evening hours, after it had turned dark. And at the end, as we came close to the Joppa Gate, we saw a gentleman standing over against a wall by a building. We recognized him and went over and began to talk to him. We knew who he was. We quickly learned that this was "Walking

THE MAGNETISM OF JESUS

Luke 20:19–21:4

Michael.” Walking Michael had been Jewel and my first tour guide when we went to the Holy Land for the first time about ten years ago. We enjoyed spending a day with him in Jerusalem, as he took us and a small company of others through the great sights in that old city. We asked him, “Michael, what are you doing now?” He said, “I’ve recently retired. I’m not doing tours anymore. In fact, you wouldn’t want to take a tour with me now. Because when I was still doing tours I was somewhat optimistic, but now I’m an agnostic. It is a process I’ve been gradually moving towards. I have come to hate religion. In fact, anybody who lives a lifetime in Jerusalem, as I have, will also hate religion.”

He went on to illustrate to me why he hated religion. He reminded me that that week, down in Bethlehem, they’d had to call out the Israeli police in order to prevent a full scale fight in the Church of the Nativity, built over the cave in which Christ was born—a fight between Aramean priests and Greek Orthodox priests, over the important issue of who had the right to wash a certain wall in that church in preparation for Christmas. He reminded me that the Minister of the Interior, an orthodox Jew, had resigned that week rather than validating an immigration paper of a lady from Dallas, Texas, who had grown up a Baptist and converted to Judaism. Her confirmation had been done under the auspices of a reformed rabbi. Since the orthodox in Jerusalem do not respect nor acknowledge reformed conversions, the Minister of the Interior, rather than validate her immigration papers, resigned. In that city, you’re reminded again, even in the Muslim world, of the conflict that even today is spilling the blood of thousands of people in Iran and Iraq. In fact, the Ayatollah Khamenei was sending twelve and thirteen-year-old boys to the front, with cardboard keys around their neck, because they were fighting Jihad, a holy war. Jihad gives one immediate entrance into paradise, and the key is placed around their neck to

THE MAGNETISM OF JESUS

Luke 20:19–21:4

remind these young boys that, if they die in battle for their country and Jihad, all they need to do is show the prophet the key and he will let them into paradise.

It is no wonder that many people in our world think that religion is the opiate of the people and are thoroughly turned off with religion. I understand that. I understand why many young people—and this last week I had the opportunity to minister to a lot of young people at my alma mater, Evangel College—go through stages in their student careers, like I went through as a student in a denominational college, of being turned off by the institutional church. By people who play games at being religious, who appear officious rather than having a vital faith and humility. I understand their being turned off by so-called phony miracle workers, some slick snake oil TV preachers and the like. We understand these kinds of things and we can speak frankly about them. I think the older I get, the less I like religion and the more I like Jesus. He stands out as a wonderful and refreshing contrast.

I see Him being tested here, in this last week of His life. He is being tested on the question of authority, which we looked at last Sunday.

I. He is then tested on the question of patriotism, in verses 20 through 26, which we have just read.

Matthew and Mark in their Gospels tell us that the people who slipped in to attempt to trap Him were actually people from two political parties of the day—religious parties as well. The Herodians and the Pharisees. They had diametrically opposite views on taxation. The Herodians, who were the combinationist party with Rome, and the Pharisees, to whom the icon or image of Caesar on a coin was a religious offense and did not really want to pay the tax at all. They come in order to trap Jesus and land Him in trouble, Luke says, “before the governor.” That is, before Pilate, the Roman governor. For they know, in asking Him this question, that if He answers that

THE MAGNETISM OF JESUS

Luke 20:19–21:4

people should give a tax to Caesar, that then the masses will not like that because they are revolutionary and Jesus had popularity with the masses. But if He tells them not to pay the tax, then He is indictable on a civil charge of fomenting sedition and rebellion, and could be held and even exterminated by the political authority.

So He was on the horns of a dilemma. Interestingly enough, Jesus was not impressed with flattery, even though they came with flattery, saying to Him, “We know that You speak and teach what is right and truly teach the way of God in accordance with the truth.” There have been a few times in my life when I have been taken in by flattery. I don’t know if that has ever happened to you or not, but I respect the Lord for being able to keep a level head when people are telling Him nice things. He did not dodge the question they put forward to Him.

The question may not be as troublesome to us as American Christians as it is to Christians living in other parts of the world. Whenever Jesus opened His mouth to teach, He always had to keep in mind that His teaching would be implemented by people over the course of centuries who would live in a multitude of different political and economic systems, and that His teaching had to be applicable to each person, not just to people who live in twentieth-century America. We in America not only have a great love for our country, but we have a great love for our form of government, so that, although we joke about taxes and would rather keep the tax rate low, we nevertheless go ahead and pay them. If not always cheerfully, sometimes not honestly, but at least we don’t feel as badly about them as some people do in other countries. For example, how would you feel as a Christian in Russia paying taxes to the Marxist regime or as a Christian in China or a Christian in Cuba? At least our situation is a little different.

Speaking of paying taxes. I’m reminded of the man who wrote the Internal Revenue Service an anonymous letter and enclosed a cashier’s check for five thousand dollars. He said, “Please find

THE MAGNETISM OF JESUS

Luke 20:19–21:4

the enclosed check. My conscience has been bothering me for past tax returns in which I cheated.

If my conscious still bothers me I will send the balance owed.”

Jesus is living in a time when the zealots in Judaism were advocating violent revolution, and within three decades, they would have their opportunity. A Jewish person paying taxes to the Romans would be equivalent to an American paying taxes to an occupying Russian power. We wouldn't like it a bit. Yet, that's the situation that many believers all over the world are in today. A totalitarian government to the right or to the left. It's difficult. Should we pay taxes to that government?

Jesus asks for a coin. He asks whose image is on it. Today you'd ask for a bill, whose picture is on the currency? That is who you give the taxes to. Give to Caesar; give to the government what is the government's.

I would like to submit to you that that word of Jesus is not an easy word. There are people who have not really appreciated what Jesus had to say. In fact, if you've traveled to third world countries and ministered—I've had the opportunity to minister in third world countries and I can identify with the tremendous economic, educational, political injustices that have sometimes been done against the masses by a small clique of the ruling rich—one suffers as he sees the misery and the poverty and the lack of education in such countries. You want to do something about it. There has been in the world, in the last twenty to twenty-five years, theology that some so-called Christians have put forward called a “theology of liberation” in which the advocacy has been that Christians, in order to overturn totalitarian regimes, should get a gun and go after the dictator, go after the regime and overthrow them and shoot them in the name of the Lord.

Jesus lays liberation theology to a rest right here. If we take the words of Jesus seriously, He says, “Give to the government whether it's on the right or the left. Give to it the taxes it wants,

THE MAGNETISM OF JESUS

Luke 20:19–21:4

the claims it makes, but give to God what is God's." I think that what Jesus is saying is that money has the image of the ruler. And things can have the image of people. But we are made in the image of God. Therefore, give to God what is His. That is, you are made in His image. You give to God what is you. If the state, for example, or the government, comes along and says, "We not only want your money but we want you. We want you to lay aside your faith. We lay claim to your highest loyalty." Then Christians have to say, "No, I will only give you what is external to me. I will never give you my heart; I will never give you my highest undying loyalty. That belongs to God alone." Christians have had to choose in that kind of context, not to bear arms against the government, but to go to prison, to suffer, to be persecuted and to be martyred. Give to the government what is external and give to God your life itself.

Jesus' answer did not, I'm sure, please everyone. It still doesn't please everyone, but it's the answer that He gives. We as individual people live in two worlds. The political world and the world of our relationship with Him. We're to give Him our hearts, for we are made in His image, money is not.

II. The next question that Jesus faces is the question of the afterlife, in verse 27 through 40.

It's raised by the Sadducees, who were a ruling minority who did not believe that any books of the Old Testament were inspired other than the first five—the Torah, the books of Moses. Nor did they, therefore, believe in resurrection, nor did they believe in angels, nor did they believe in the Spirit. Their question, I think, had been tried out on the Pharisees before. I think they were highly amused with it, since it was such an interesting question. They really drew it out of Deuteronomy 25:5–6, which was actually a law which protected the property rights of a widow. If a widow were left and she had no children, then she did not, in a patriarchal society, have any title to land. She was a pauper. She somehow needed either to have the security of husband, a

THE MAGNETISM OF JESUS

Luke 20:19–21:4

father, or a son. So if she was a widow and had no son, it was the obligation—a merciful provision of the law in that patriarchal society—for the brother of the deceased to marry her, and the first child born of their union would be the heir to the dead man’s property, thereby protecting the estate and passing it on.

This poor woman, according to the story, had seven husbands, none of whom she had a son or child by. What’s interesting about this story, first of all, is that religious people are often far from the heart of God. And they can be extremely callous toward people. So we have the Sadducees, probably reveling in telling this story without even considering the grief of a woman who, in succession, has lain to rest seven husbands. Not a word of pity for her. It’s an awfully cynical question, which showed the disdain of the Sadducees toward the whole idea of a resurrection.

When Jesus answers their question, we often skip over the first part of His answer, but that first part is important. He says, “The people of this age marry and are given in marriage.” Even in Jesus’ day, there were religious teachers who taught that marriage was not God’s highest will for life, that asceticism and celibacy was the preferred lifestyle. Jesus distanced Himself from all those groups and said that marriage, the procreation and ongoing of the human race, was part of the condition of this age.

The second part of Jesus’ answer then related to the afterlife, where Jesus not only endorses the resurrection but adds a few details that have not been priorly revealed. One is that there is going to be no marriage in heaven. I know that troubles some young people here who are not yet married. You say, “I hope the Lord would postpone the rapture until at least I can be married and have a family and have that slice of life as well.” So some of you probably think that’s terrible—no marriage in heaven. As Billy Graham said, “If there is no marriage in heaven, God has something even better, which is great.” Some of you who have been married for a while may be

THE MAGNETISM OF JESUS

Luke 20:19–21:4

thankful that there is no marriage in heaven—I don't know. But, of course, the foundational reason for God's establishing marriage in the first place is the furtherance and continuance of the human race. A hundred years from now all of us, if the Lord tarries, will be gone from the scene. If the human race is to continue, each generation must give birth to the next generation. In heaven, that is not necessary. Jesus says that the reason why is that we'll never die. We're going to be like the angels. Not like the angels in the sense that we don't have freedom of choice and all that. But like the angels in the sense that, once made, we last forever. We'll never die. So there's no need to bring another generation into existence then.

We're going to be forever people. Children of the resurrection. I'm attracted to the magnetism of the Lord, who holds out endless quantity for life. And not only the quantity of life—eternal life—but the quality of life that He promises.

To the surprise of the Sadducees, Jesus grounds His argument for the resurrection in the part of the Old Testament which they themselves accepted. In fact, He refers to the account of the bush. That's a very interesting phrase—because in those days you didn't have chapter references; Jesus couldn't say, "Now, according to Exodus 3..." nobody should have known what He was talking about; so He says, "In the account of the bush..." which is, in that part of the Old Testament, where Moses is being called. "Take off your shoes. Where you're standing is holy ground." He's confronted by the presence of God and a bush that was consumed with fire but did not burn. And he is protesting God's call on his life and he wants to know who God is and God says to him, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." Jesus' whole point is: if Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had ceased to exist, God would have said, "I *was* the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." But the fact that God used the present tense, "I *am*," when he spoke to Moses, means not only that God is alive, but Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob remain alive, for God cannot be the God of the dead but

THE MAGNETISM OF JESUS

Luke 20:19–21:4

He is the God of the living. So Jesus anchors His teaching and His claim right in the revelation that God gave to Moses. The resurrection is a reality established by God.

I'm drawn to the magnetism of one who calls me to a life after this life. Not a God who sends me on psychological trips and out-of-body experiences to the moon, under the guidance of a channel who has a three-thousand-five-hundred-year-old spirit. But instead, a real Jesus of Nazareth who appears in human history; who, in the presence of eyewitnesses, lays down his life for us and, in the presence of eyewitnesses, rises again. Not a subjective experience but an objective experience that is corroborated by the testimony of faithful and reliable witnesses.

III. There is, then, another question that is faced in this text which we have read today. It is the question of ancestry in verses 41–44.

All the questions are done being put forward to Jesus, so He puts one forward to those that are around Him. At that time, the expectation of the Messiah would be that He is the Son of David—the political ruler from the line of David. So the Lord says, “How can the Messiah be the Son of David when David himself says, ‘The Lord said to my Lord...’; how could the Messiah be David’s son when David is praying to the Messiah and calling Him my Lord?”

What the Lord is really doing is putting a riddle before His audience. He knows the answer, and we know the answer now. Jesus’ identity is something that nobody had guessed. He is the Son of David, but He is also David’s Lord. He is David’s Son in that, according to the flesh, He descended from David through Mary. But He is the eternal God, David’s Lord. The Eternal God who became flesh, “the Lord said to my Lord.” This becomes a favorite Psalm in the New Testament, Psalm 110: “The Father says to Jesus, ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies footstool for Your feet.’” The Lord is now reigning on His throne in the heavens and waiting until the time until all things have come under His feet.

THE MAGNETISM OF JESUS

Luke 20:19–21:4

When I was in the Cairo museum, I got a new insight on what a footstool meant within biblical terminology. In the King Tut exhibit (Tut died at eighteen years of age and he didn't have the chance to amass all the wealth that Rameses II had, who ruled for ninety-nine years, and all of his stuff has been pilfered years ago. But it wouldn't be bad for any one of us to have the kind of wealth that eighteen year old Tut had. It was fabulous, beyond description, even though it was puny compared to old Egyptian standards.) But there, in the museum in Cairo, is the throne that was placed in the tomb where Tut was to sit on in the afterlife, modeled after his real throne that he sat on as a young man in life. With that gold throne there was also a golden footstool. And artistically engraved in that footstool are the very clear images of the enemies of Egypt when Tut was alive. So you can see a Chaldean. You can see an Assyrian. You can see an Ethiopian. And their nationalities and the garb in which they're dressed are clearly there. The reason why the images of the enemies are laid out on the footstool is so that, when the Pharaoh is sitting there and he's resting and he wants to put his foot up, his feet are on his enemies. Enemies are where they should be—underneath your feet.

So David, in Psalm 110, taking that well-known analogy in his Near Eastern world says, "There will come a day when all the enemies of God will be underneath His feet." The Scripture says that we are waiting for that because, knowing that someday every knee will bow to Him, we've already confessed that Jesus is the Lord.

No one has an ancestry like Jesus Christ. There's no one that's ever come into life bearing the titles that He bears. There's no one of higher rank that has ever walked the planet earth. Jesus of Nazareth. His magnetism appeals to us.

IV. The last issue that faces us in the Scripture that we've read today is not a question as such but an issue. An issue of hypocrisy versus genuine spirituality.

THE MAGNETISM OF JESUS

Luke 20:19–21:4

After everybody's done challenging Jesus, He then goes on the offense. He's magnificent on the offense. Jesus takes after the religious leaders, who have all the trappings of being officious and religious, but none of the vitality of faith that God requires. In essence He says, "You go about in flowing robes [expensive clothes, that is] and you love people to say 'Doctor' to you, and 'Reverend to you' and 'Rabbi' to you and 'teacher' to you; and you like being seated up front in the synagogue and, at banquets, you like the head table. But what you're really doing, instead of plying your trade as a good rabbi ought to do, you are depending upon widows to give you gifts. They wind up emptying their estate so that you can live a wealthy lifestyle and have vacation homes in various places and, for a show, you make lengthy prayers."

I want to say several things about hypocrisy:

A. First of all, it's easier to see it in others in ourselves. I'm always much quicker at spotting it in others. I was a college student. Talking with college students this week, I mentioned that one of the reasons I almost lost my faith in a denominational college was that I was very quick at judging people. I could spot where all the hypocrites were and I knew their names even. But I discovered that it's a lot easier for me to condemn something in somebody else than it is to condemn it in myself. So the Lord tells us that we're not in as good a position as Him to judge hypocrisy, and we always first have to look at the beam, the log that is lying in our own eye before we try to take the speck out of somebody else's.

B. The next thing that can be said about hypocrisy, and you can see it from Jesus' teaching, is that it really turns people away from God. These religious leaders that wore their religiosity with such pomp and show wound up alienating the common man from a faith in God.

I was talking with a person yesterday, very near and dear to me, whose grown son has had a very difficult time establishing himself in the faith. Just in the last couple of years, after being married

THE MAGNETISM OF JESUS

Luke 20:19–21:4

and giving birth to three children, they've gotten their family involved in church and have been serving the Lord. But their church had a fight and some of the people left. This young man, now with his wife and three little children, hasn't gone to church in three months. They were turned off by people who said, "We love you," and then turned around and did mean things.

Jesus is calling us to a lifestyle where our deeds are consistent with our words. I'm always keenly aware of the fact that sin isn't just something that occurs in the gutter, but sin infiltrates our highest and noblest aspirations and ideals, as man or a woman, and our highest and noblest ideal is to worship God. And sin is present even there. The devil fell, not because he was tempted with lust, not because he was sensual. The devil fell through pride. There will always be in religion, whether it's the church or another religion, "professionals" who make a living off of other people's offerings and pile it into themselves, without knowing anything about a personal relationship with God, or long ago having forgotten what that relationship involved.

If Jesus sets anything before us, it's the fact that the way we do something is as important as the goal we have. I think sometimes I have been a witness to the fact that people have gotten means and goals confused. Someone in the ministry may have a very worthy goal in mind, a goal that really meets a need and does God's work in the world, but Jesus wants us to be as honest and as righteous and as pure with the way we do something as what we actually wind up doing. What brings the ministry of Jesus Christ into reproach in the world and what causes the church of Jesus Christ to be criticized so harshly are those who will do anything to get a buck in the name of the Lord and don't have means that are consistent with the goals that are righteous, which honor God. The Lord calls His church to a special sensitivity, I think, on this matter. If the church doesn't correct itself and correct its leaders who go astray, then the world will do it for us.

THE MAGNETISM OF JESUS

Luke 20:19–21:4

When Jesus is done excoriating the hypocrites, He turns and sits down and begins watching people put their money in the offering. That's kind of interesting, Jesus doing that. The Old Testament temple had, in the outer court, thirteen big offering boxes that were sort of in the shape of trumpets. Each of them had a label. You could designate an offering—some for the wood, for incense, for a variety of needs. You could select what cause you were going to give to. People were coming and making a parade of their gifts. Then there's this little lady that comes. She's a widow and she had two copper coins. They were the smallest coinage of the day. Maybe a sixteenth of a cent—both of them added together. "That," Jesus says, "is all she had. And she gave it."

A couple things about her example, an example of genuine spirituality in contrast to hypocrisy, should be noted.

One, is that Jesus values her as a person. He singles her out. She is significant to Him. There is no such thing as a person who is insignificant to the Lord. When I think of this little lady, I think of some of the churches in Eastern Europe that I've preached in, where the audience is predominantly older ladies who come all wrapped in the shawls and their very thread-bare clothing; they sit there—often in black. We look around and wonder, where are the young people? And this kind of thing. We forget that sometimes, when the fire of persecution has been turned against the church, that the young people, the educated and the workers, may have left and the only people that are keeping the fires of faith alive are the little old ladies. The world looks at them and says, "Just let them have their thing. Why persecute them? If they want to go worship their superstition and give their offering, they're not harming us. Just let them go." So the state allows them to go to church. They're the people that are keeping the fires of the faith alive. All of a sudden you look around and, five years later, you see the church is filled with

THE MAGNETISM OF JESUS

Luke 20:19–21:4

young people. You ask, what's happened? Those little old ladies have prayed that fire into a full flame and those sparks have gone everywhere and lit a spiritual revolution. And never ever look down on a little old lady in the body of Christ. There's a whole lot of power there. And a whole lot of spirituality.

Jesus does a marvelous thing by telling us that the world may write them off, as they don't have any power—there are no titles to their name and so forth—but in the body of Christ, that person is powerful. Jesus notices. It's their gift of faith and prayer which carry the church when the fires have been banked and fan a new revolution of spiritual vitality.

Then another thing that Jesus does is value her gift. He not only values her, He values her gift and He calls attention to it. Anyone who's ever been involved in a capital fundraising drive knows that you value the large donors. If you give a million dollars, we'll name a building after you or we'll name a wing of a building after you. If you give fifty billion dollars, we'll name the whole campus after you, or whatever. If you take a walk down the halls of the hospital, which is a worthy private enterprise in our area, you see the names on the wall. They're not honoring people who have given a sixteenth of a cent. They're benefactors, patrons, friends, donors—those who've given big amounts. Jesus takes all that and turns it on its head. He says, "It's not how much we give. It's the proportion that's more important than the amount."

I think the teaching of Jesus is so strong in this that you'll notice in our church facilities that nothing ever bears anybody's name. We ought to take the Lord's teaching seriously, that we give in secret. But He values the proportion more than the amount. He says, "This little lady who gave a sixteenth of a cent—two coins—gave more than the people who were dropping the hundreds of thousands of bucks, because they gave out of their richness and still had money left over. But she

THE MAGNETISM OF JESUS

Luke 20:19–21:4

gave out of her poverty, and threw in all she had.” The Lord challenges us in our hearts about our own dedication and commitment with that tremendous observation of this little lady’s giving.

As I read this text today, I’m drawn by the magnetism of Jesus. The magnetism of Jesus calls for my highest loyalty. It’s not to the government. It’s not to America, as much as I love our country. It can never be to a country. The highest loyalty is owed to Jesus. I’m drawn to the magnetism of Jesus because He lifts up into the age to come. In the year 2087, the Lord tarrying, all of us will be gone. But we’ll not be gone. We’ll be with Him. His magnetism puts us in an upward call.

I’m drawn to His magnetism because He presents Himself to us as that person of highest title and highest rank who’s ever lived. I’m drawn to Him because He stands against all that is false and is phony in religion and stands with those who serve Him and love Him with a whole heart. The spies that are described in Luke 20:21 didn’t mean what they said. But they wound up, nevertheless, speaking the truth. “Teacher, we know that what You speak and teach is right and that You do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth.”

Closing Prayer

Lord, we’re here for the very same reason. We know that You speak and teach what is right. And that You do not respect the externals of people. You do not show partiality. But You teach us the way of God in accordance with the truth. We take a moment, Lord, to let You put some questions in our own heart. You are our authority in life. We let You draw forth our highest loyalty, more than anything or more than any goal or dream, or more than any person. We truly give to You what is Yours—our life. You lift us, Lord. Not only in this life, but You lift us to life eternal. And we’re glad, Lord, that we are people of promise and of hope. We’ve acknowledged You. There’s no one mightier, no one more glorious that has ever lived, than You. You’ve passed the rank of any five-star general. Any Tsar or ruler, any president or emperor. You are the

THE MAGNETISM OF JESUS

Luke 20:19–21:4

Lord, David's Son, David's Lord. We thank You for standing against all that is false in religious faith and for ministering to us the truth. We thank You for encouraging us to worship You from our hearts. Not simply to go through a ritual, not to adopt something that is outer that looks and feels comfortable. But to worship You from the depths of our being. You draw us, Lord. And we thank You for drawing us. Draw us, even in this moment, as we come to prayer. For those here in this service who've not made You their highest loyalty, may today mark a change. For those today who have gone through grief and suffering and loss, this is not the end. This is not Your last word. Encourage them today, Lord. Those who are patterning their life after people that are stars or that are persons of significance to them, but who have a lifestyle that doesn't model after You. Whether they're rock stars or football stars or religious stars. There's only one star. You're the star, Lord. May our life seek to follow in Your steps. Help us, Lord, to stand with You and serve You with our whole heart. We ask it in Your name. Amen.