



## Part 18 – As One with Authority

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### Matthew 7:28-29

Chapter seven concludes with Matthew's record of the reaction of the crowds to Jesus' teaching. The response of the crowds is one of astonishment. Jesus taught *not* as one whose authority was derivative. That is, Jesus did not merely comment on the Torah or earlier traditions as the scribes did. Rather, he spoke as one who possessed authority over the tradition. He even goes so far as to proclaim God's law in ways that they had never heard before ("You have heard it said...but I say...").

The authority that left the crowds astonished was an authority native to the Person of Jesus. It is the authority he possesses as the only begotten Son of God. Though the crowds do not yet conceive of the full truth behind his apparent authority, what they have heard are the words of the Christ, the Son of the living God. In Jesus, God spoke to the people in a new way. He was not merely an expert in God's law. He was the Source. Jesus was not merely interpreting the law. He spoke to them as the divine Lawgiver.

### **Who is this Man?**

Many people around the world, including adherents of other religions express great admiration for Jesus as a teacher of morality. Secular unbelievers in the west point to portions of the Sermon on the Mount specifically as containing great wisdom and virtue worthy of reception. "Blessed are the merciful," "Blessed are the peacemakers," "Judge not that you be not judged," "Do to others what you have them do to you." Jesus was a great teacher of timeless ethical truths, they say. He was no theologian. He was entirely uninterested in dogma, they say.

But this explanation cannot stand up to the slightest examination for they leave out other portions of the Sermon on the Mount and entire bodies of teaching recorded elsewhere in the gospels. This reductionistic approach to Jesus comes from a desire to have him as a first century teacher of admirable ethics but not the as the One who forgave sins, claimed to be the Son of God, predicted his death and resurrection, and called for faith and obedience from everyone in the world. "It is impossible to drive a wedge between the Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount and the Jesus of the rest of the New Testament."<sup>1</sup> The Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount is the eternally existing, miracle working, sin forgiving, atonement making, and death defeating Savior proclaimed throughout the Scriptures.

**Vs. 28** – "And when Jesus finished these sayings..." – There are five major discourses or bodies of teaching recorded in Matthew's gospel. Each discourse concludes with the same or very nearly the same words as the opening words of verse 28 (11:1; 13:53; 19:1; and 26:1).

"...the crowds were astonished at his teaching." – The word translated "astonished" (from the verb *ekplesso*) is a compound word: *ek* – "out" / *plesso* – "wholly." It refers to someone who is overwhelmed, *knocked out* with wonder. And all these years later men and women around the world continue to be overwhelmed by Jesus.

**Vs. 29** – "...for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes." – Jesus came teaching and preaching. It was the ministry that he would give to the apostles as they took on the role of his ambassadors. God had long ago designed his people to be a hearing people. But there were many teachers among the Jews. What made Jesus so exceptional? It was the manner and content of his teaching which astonished them. It was a manner so different from that to which they were accustomed from their own experts in the law.

- This is not necessarily a negative critique of the scribes. It was the job of the scribes to provide commentary on the Scriptures. A typical scribe taught by citing authorities for his viewpoint, offering his own view only when it was necessary to choose between conflicting opinions in the tradition. The scribes honored the tradition as it was passed along to them. Innovation, creativity, or originality of thought was not their goal.

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<sup>1</sup> John Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1978) p. 213

- While Jesus certainly taught and applied the Scriptures it is clear that he also came to the people with teaching that they had never heard. He was not just commenting. He was legislating. Jesus came to them with the authority of the Divine Lawgiver. He taught according to his own authority. That is why he could say that the people must “do” or practice *his* words if they were to live (vs. 24). He was not simply an interpreter of the law; he was the lawgiver.
- Jesus spoke with an authority that was not merely conferred upon him but was native to his divine character. Unsurprisingly then, there was a unique impact upon those who heard Jesus preach and teach. Spurgeon wrote that Jesus “spoke royally with royal assurance.” Calvin wrote that Jesus’ teaching caused such impact because the “strange, indescribable and unwonted [unusual] majesty drew to him the minds of men.” In other words, Jesus’ teaching weighed upon the conscience of those who heard him.

### **1. Jesus has authority over nature.**

The many and varied miracles of Jesus demonstrated his authority over the created order. He healed the sick, rebuked winds, and walked on water. Jesus’ authority over nature was a demonstration of his divine nature. There is nothing in creation which operates outside the orbit of the Lord’s authority. In Jesus, all things in creation hold together. He is “the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created...” (**Colossians 1:15**).

### **2. Jesus has authority over salvation.**

Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s covenant promises. All of salvation history hinges on Jesus. By his perfect life, atoning death, and victorious resurrection Jesus saves sinners and guarantees the inauguration of the new creation. Before the foundations of the world, the Father “chose us *in Christ*” (**Ephesians 1:4**). The elect are the Son’s inheritance from the Father, none of whom he will ever lose (**John 10:29; Ephesians 1:18**). Jesus did not accomplish a merely potential salvation for unspecified people. He declared that “All that the Father gives me will come to me...” (**John 6:37**).

### **3. Jesus has authority over our lives.**

Jesus is the Lord and Lawgiver for all humanity. He calls us to believe in him unreservedly and to obey all of his words (**Matthew 7:24; 28:20**). Every human creature who has ever lived will declare that “Jesus is Lord” (**Philippians 2:11**).

### **4. Jesus has authority over his enemies.**

Jesus cast out demons demonstrating his authority over Satan (**Luke 8:26ff**). He possessed authority over his earthly enemies who plotted his death. Speaking of his coming crucifixion Jesus declared, “No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord” (**John 10:18**). On the night of his arrest he did not resist but said, “Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?” (**Matthew 26:53**).

### **5. Jesus has authority over his church.**

“And he is the head of the body, the church” (**Colossians 1:18**). The Person and work of Jesus is at the center of the church’s liturgy as the gospel shapes our worship. His example is the pattern of our piety. His death and resurrection are the payment for our sin and the ground of our hope. And it is Jesus who gives the church her mission: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...” (**Matthew 28:18ff**).

### **6. Jesus has authority over life and death.**

Jesus is the source and giver of life (**John 1:4; 10:10**). He demonstrated this authority by raising the dead and by his own resurrection on the third day of his crucifixion. He declared himself to be “the resurrection and the life” (**John 11:25**). Death cannot keep us because Jesus has removed its power. It is Jesus’ authority to raise us up to eternal life and bring us into his blessed presence which forms the ground of the Christian hope (**John 6:40; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58**).