

Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ

Days of Challenge 1: The Baptism of John

Last time...the morning of the 3rd day of the Final Week

Jesus taught the 12 about the fig tree, faith, and forgiveness

A very important lesson regarding faith...how sinners are justified and saved

Our faith is

1. a gift (Eph 2:8-9)
2. a measure of Jesus' faith (Rom 12:3, Heb 12:2)
3. smaller than a mustard seed (Matt 17:20)

4. imperfect, not 100% doubt-free (Mark 9:23-24, Luke 8:22-25)
5. being perfected in Christ (Col 1:27-28)

TR/Majority text from Antioch (Paul's center of evangelism)

vs

Alexandrian/Minority text from Alexandria (center of Gnosticism)

“faith of Christ” (sound doctrine)

vs

“faith in Christ” (our faith, opens the door to steal God's glory)

This time...the 3rd day of the Final Week continues

Jesus Christ

- our Passover, soon to be sacrificed for us (1 Cor 5:7)
- the Lamb of God (John 1:29), the Lord's Passover (Ex 12:11)

will fulfill the Law (Matt 5:17), being subjected to very critical “inspection” in the Lord's house (Ex 12:3-6)

So far in this Final Week

- the Jews (leaders) had publicly declared their intention of arresting Jesus (John 11:55-57)
- but the people rallied to Jesus, rather than railing against Him
- in His Triumphal Entry and subsequent cleansing of the Temple, Jesus humiliated the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees before all the people as He takes charge of His house, the Temple
- the Jews are on the defensive
- they confront and challenge Jesus...a challenge for leadership

This morning's study is the beginning of a very lengthy challenge that will consume the 3rd and 4th days of the Final Week

There is no clear demarcation of days/time as there is with the previous days

We will be in Mark 11, Luke 19-20, and Matt 21

Mark 11:27-33

v27-28 come again to Jerusalem...come to Him...By what authority...who gave:

After Jesus and the 12 stop at the cursed fig tree on their way from Bethany,
they continue to Jerusalem and to the Temple (courtyards)

In the Temple Jesus is confronted by the religious, moral, and political leaders of
the Jews

- Who's Who of the Jews
- Israel's shepherds
- the self-righteous religious leaders
- "Guards and Keepers" of the Law of Moses

They challenge Jesus...for leadership of the people

1. By what authority do You these things?
2. Who gave You this authority to do these things?

What are "these things"?

1. Triumphal entry into Jerusalem...as if He were king!
2. Allowing the people to proclaim Him as Messiah and King
3. Taking charge of the Temple by "throwing the bums out"
(disrupting their very profitable business again)
 - overturning the tables of the moneychangers
 - overturning the benches of the dove merchants
 - prohibiting any commercial traffic in the Temple
4. Taught/claimed that the Temple was His house
5. Healed the blind and the lame in the Temple
(that should have been a pretty good indication!)
6. Taught daily in the Temple (Luke 19:47)
 - They are the teachers!
 - No one dared to teach without Rabbinic authorization
7. Preached the gospel (Luke 20:1)

Like their father the devil, the Jewish leaders are very crafty and cunning
Since, according to the Law, the chief priests etc are the authority in the Temple,
with their 2 questions they are

- implying that Jesus is rejecting God's authority given to them
- attempting to get Jesus to condemn Himself with His answer

v29-30 I will ask of you once question...the baptism of John:

Why did Jesus answer their question with His question?

1. He has repeatedly and explicitly answered these questions, with both words (teachings and in previous confrontations) and deeds (miracles);
2. Answering a question with a question is often times more effective than answering with a statement
 - Come, let us reason together
 - In thinking about My question, you should be able answer your question
 - If you can rightly discern My question, you will rightly discern My answer
3. Their answer will expose their cowardice and hypocrisy

Jesus' counter-question is about

1. the baptism of John
 - an innovation, something new
 - baptism not for ceremonial cleansing but for the remission/forgiveness of sin (vs sacrifice per the Law)
2. it's origination
 - in heaven...from God
 - not from God but from the imagination of man

v31-33a they reasoned with themselves...We cannot tell:

The RMP leaders did not reason with Jesus but amongst themselves

If we say the baptism of John was from God, He will ask why we did not believe John...and we lose

Note: an admission that they did not believe John the Baptist

If we say the baptism of John was a witty invention of man,...

(semi-colon...as if their speech trailed off, leaving the "then" unspoken)...
and we lose

Note: an admission of their fear of the people, who most certainly believed John

- was a messenger of God
- broke 400 years of silence from heaven
- was a true prophet vs a false prophet

We are in a Lose-Lose situation here

(we've been outflanked by Jesus of Nazareth again!!!)...
so, "We cannot tell"

Translation:

- We cannot win
- We will not tell (even though we know)
- We plead the 5th

The cowardly, not-as-cunning-as they-think children of the devil think they have sidestepped Jesus' counter to their challenge

v33b Neither do I tell you:

They lost again

Giving no answer, they received no answer

The chief priests' etc "We cannot tell" was a humiliating admission of what

- the nation knew...
- they could not deny...

that the message and innovation of John the Baptist was from heaven/God

They are too corrupt and too cowardly to answer Jesus' question

So... We're done here.

Let's go to the Gospel of Luke for a parallel passage

Luke 19:47 – 20:8

Chapter 19

v47-48 And He taught daily in the Temple...could not find:

Every day during the Final Week, Jesus was teaching in the Temple...His house

All the while, the Jewish Who's Who, the rich and the elites, are looking for a way to kill Him

But...they could not find a deceptive "He is evil and we are good" way to accomplish their goal

The people (whom they feared) were hanging on His every word,

He was at the very center of everything and everyone

The frustration of the chief priests, scribes, and elders was mounting daily

Chapter 20

v1-2 as He taught...and preached the gospel...Tell us:

On one of those days...the 3rd day of this Final Week...while Jesus is

- teaching the Word of God...absolute, unchanging truth
- preaching the gospel...the Good News of the Messiah

the RMP leaders confront and challenge Him

Which means the people listening attentively to Jesus are a part of this scene,
they are eyewitnesses of this challenge and Jesus' counter

The leaders demand to know

Who put You in charge around here?

Who is Your Rabbi/Master?

Whose credentials are You carrying?

v3-8 all the people will stone us:

The leaders feared

- Jesus, for their livelihoods (authority and luxurious lifestyle)
- the people, for their lives

As they contemplated Jesus' question countering their challenge,
honesty and truth are NOT the objectives
Ch 19:47 is

Jesus has put them between a Rock (Him) and a hard spot (the people who are
watching and listening attentively)

With either answer, they lose

So they offer...no answer

They plead ignorance, thereby displaying their ignorance and hypocrisy
before God and man

If they thought they gave a clever answer, all the people saw right thru their
rhetoric/nonsense...most people can "smell" a lie

They deceived no one, but themselves

The people watched them come and challenge Jesus...

and watched Jesus again humiliate them and put them in their place

Jesus remains in charge of the Temple

Let's go to the Gospel of Matthew for some unique information regarding this
initial challenge to Jesus' authority

Matt 21:23-32

v23-27 If we shall say...But if we shall say:

The challengers are left with nothing to say, nothing to advance their cause

Luke 19:47

Anything they would say hurts their cause

So they say nothing...while saying very much and hurting their cause
by coming across as liars and hypocrites before God and man

And Jesus leaves them empty-handed...without answers to their questions
Or did He?

They knew what they nation knew – John's message and innovation was
from God

They denied it

Therefore, they also know Jesus' authority and Who gave it to Him – God
They deny this also

And Jesus calls them on it

v28-31a what think ye...man had two sons...The first:

Guys, tell Me this...

Jesus teaches a parable and quizzes His enemies about it

A man with two sons

Man to Son #1: Go work today in my vineyard

Son #1 to father: No (with defiant independence)

Then, convicted, he repented and did as asked by his father

Man to Son #2: Go work today in my vineyard

Son #2 to father: Sure thing Abba!

Lip service because he had no intention of working

Which son did the will of (obeyed) his father?

The RMP leaders answer correctly – the son who did vs the son who said

Having come to challenge Jesus, attempting to get Him to condemn Himself...

Jesus turns the tables...

In giving the correct answer to Jesus' parable, they condemned themselves.

They dug a pit...and fell into it (Prov 26:27)

v31b-32 I say unto you...repented not...might believe him:
"You are Son #2."

I say unto you: Thus saith the Lord
publicans and harlots: In the eyes of the "holier than thou" RMP leaders,
these are contemptuous despicables

For: because

John came unto you in the way of righteousness: with the Word of God

Prov 8:8-21

Wisdom/Jesus (1 Cor 1:30) is speaking

Prov 12:28

ye believed him not: their choice, not God's choice

when ye had seen it: When you saw the publicans and harlots (Son #1) believe
John (and Is 55:11), you did not:

- repent – your hard hearts got harder
Word of God either hardens or softens man's heart...man's choice
- believe John
 - Luke 7:26-30
 - his testimony of himself: the prophetic fulfillment of Is 40:3,
the voice crying in the wilderness preparing the way of
the LORD, making straight in the desert a highway for our
God
 - thus, his testimony of Me: the LORD, your God
 - his testimony of himself: the prophetic fulfillment of Mal 3:1,
the messenger of God who will prepare the way before Me,
the LORD of hosts
 - thus, his testimony of Me: God, the LORD of hosts
 - his testimony of himself: NOT Christ, NOT Elijah,
NOT The Prophet
 - thus, his testimony of Me: One standing among you
 - Whose shoes he is not worthy to unloose
 - Who comes after him (in time) even though I was
before him (in eternity)
 - his testimony of himself: saw the Spirit descending from
heaven and the One who sent me to baptize with water said
to me that the One upon Whom the Spirit descends will
baptize with the Holy Ghost
 - thus, his testimony of Me: Son of God, the salvation of God
 - his testimony to you
 - generation of vipers...seed of the snake (Gen 3)
 - bring forth fruit suitable of repentance

Jesus countered the challenge of the Jews such that they publicly admitted that they rejected God's message to the nation thru John the Baptist, the miraculous son of a righteous priest (Zacharias)

Is 65:1-6

This day of challenge is far from over!
There is much to come!

Application

But so far, what does this mean to us?

1. Free advice to the unbeliever and the backslider:

Never challenge Jesus!

You will never win, you will be exposed and humiliated and find yourself in the pit you dug

Jer 17:10 I the LORD search the heart

Jer 16:17 For mine eyes *are* upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes

When you come to challenge Jesus, expect a heart-revealing inspection by God!

2. More free advice to the unbeliever, the backslider, and the believer:

Just do as you are told

The Father loves us, loved us before we loved Him

He sent His Son to bear the punishment for our defiant independence/disobedience

Jesus Christ is The Way of Righteousness...there is no other way!

The Father wants us to believe Him, He wants our sin, He wants us to follow Jesus

So, James 1:22

3. Beware of Self-righteousness (holier than thou), a very sophisticated form of idolatry

Luke 7:36-39..."God's heart is like my heart."

vs a humble self-examination of "Is my heart like God's heart?"

But the Lord...and everyone else...sees right thru it!

And all can smell it too...it is a stench in the nostrils

Trials and tribulation will work it out of your heart

4. We who are

- “in Christ”
- witnesses of Christ
- ambassadors of Christ
- citizens of the Kingdom of God

a. are under authority

Matt 8:5-13

Who is our authority? (Question 1 of the hypocrites)

Our King, the Living Word and King of kings

b. have authority!

Mark 16:15-18

Who gave it to us? (Question 2 of the hypocrites)

Our King, against Whom no challenge will stand!!!!