



The Authority of Jesus

(Mark 11:27-33)

Bottom Line: Jesus has authority over everything, including how we get to God.

When has your authority ever been tested? As a boss, as a parent, as a leader, etc? How did you respond to that test?

What makes a leader someone you want to follow?

We all, whether we realize it or not, bear some kind of authority in this world. For some, we have authority because of our positions at our jobs, our positions in our families, or our positions in our communities. For others, we have authority over something because of our relationship to it, like our possessions or our art or anything else we own or create. And when that authority is challenged or threatened, how we respond can tell us a lot about ourselves and how well we are or are not stewarding the authority that we have. This is exactly what happened to Jesus.

Read Mark 11:27-33.

Verse 27 says that Jesus was confronted while “He was walking in the temple.” Why is this strange? (Consider what Jesus did in the temple just before this encounter). What does that tell us about how Jesus perceived His own authority?

The “chief priests and the scribes and the elders” is a reference to the Sanhedrin, who were the Jewish leaders of Israel. Apparently, what Jesus had done in cleansing the temple resulted in the highest members of Jewish government to come question Him about His actions. They considered themselves as the highest authority and they saw Jesus as a usurper of their authority. Wanting to protect their position of authority over the temple, the sacrifices, and the religious activities of Israel, they confronted Jesus and asked Him, “by what authority do you are you doing these things, or who gave you authority to do them?”

Do you think the Sanhedrin was genuinely interested in hearing Jesus’ answer to this question? How might they have been trying to trap Him?

The Sanhedrin was attempting to get Jesus to claim an authority other than the Sanhedrin, which would pit him against the leaders of Israel, or an authority given to Him other than Rome, which would pit Him against the Roman government. They were not expecting Jesus’ counter-question, which proved how silly they were.

Read Jesus’ counter-question in verses 29-30. What is the brilliance of Jesus’ question? (The context of the verses afterward dealing with the discussion amongst the Sanhedrin will help you).

Jesus did not evade the Sanhedrin’s question, instead, He proved His point very well: that His authority came from God. John’s ministry was one that pointed to Jesus as the Messiah, so if the Sanhedrin affirmed John’s ministry, then they would affirm Jesus’ authority as having come



from God. Additionally, they would have been condemned by the people as hypocritical for not supporting the ministry of John or Jesus. If the Sanhedrin denied John's ministry, then the people in the crowds would have been angered against them (v. 32), and their own authority would have been brought into question. The only way out, even though it was not a good one, was to confess inability to decide. What they did not realize was that such inability disqualified them from being religious authorities. Jesus' question was brilliant in that it solidified His own authority and also minimized the perceived authority of the Sanhedrin.

Additionally, Mark's comment that the Sanhedrin "feared the people" shows that they derived their sense of authority from men rather than from God. What is our source of spiritual authority in this world? Where are we tempted to derive authority from other sources?

The statement that Jesus made when He cleansed the temple was that He was the one who had authority to dictate and determine how people could commune and interact with God. He was showing that no longer did people have to go through the temple ceremonies, especially since they had become corrupted. He declared that He was the way and the truth and the life. He claimed that no one could come to the Father except through Him. The temple was no longer needed. Jesus was here, commissioned and authorized by God, to reconcile us to Himself.

APPLICATION

Jesus humiliated the Sanhedrin by showing them two things: 1) They didn't have the authority they thought they did, and 2) Jesus had more authority than they assumed.

How do we sometimes think we have more authority than we actually do? How can we ensure that our authority (when it comes to spiritual matters) is sure and good and rightly derived?

How do we sometimes rob Christ of authority that is rightly His? What do we sometimes assume that He can't do? How can we ensure that we surrender to Jesus everything that He has authority over? What DOES Jesus have authority over?