

权柄之争——马可福音 11:27-33

Confrontation of Authority—Mark 11:27-33

Introduction and Outline

- Scripture reading: Mark 11:27-33; John 5:17-30
Mark 11:27-33 (NASB 1995)
27 They came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to Him, 28 and began saying to Him, “By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?” 29 And Jesus said to them, “I will ask you one question, and you answer Me, and then I will tell you by what authority I do these things. 30 Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men? Answer Me.” 31 They began reasoning among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say, ‘Then why did you not believe him?’ 32 But shall we say, ‘From men?’”—they were afraid of the people, for everyone considered John to have been a real prophet. 33 Answering Jesus, they said, “We do not know.” And Jesus said to them, “Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”
- Authority. An unwelcome concept. Many people want to have authority; few want to submit to authority. Submission implies constraints and limitations, and our sinful nature instinctively resists any form of constraint. The more a culture promotes freedom and democracy, the more it’ll dislike authority. As a result, we see all kinds of things around us that evidence a rebellious spirit against authority.
- However, all authority and order are part of God's perfect design (Romans 13:1). Whether authority in marriage, parental authority, teacher’s authority in school, employer’s authority at workplace, or civil authority of the government—all authority and order are established by God for His glory.
- Of course, no human authority is perfect, so abuse of authority does occur. But even when the perfect Authority did come into the world, how did people treat him? Jesus had demonstrated authority in teaching (Mark 1:22), authority over demons (Mark 1:27), authority to forgive sins (Mark 2:10), authority to grant believers the right to become God’s children (John 1:12), and authority to execute final judgment (John 5:27). Yet, the Jewish leaders rejected this perfect Authority.
- Outline:
Title: Confrontation of Authority—Mark 11:27-33
 1. False Authority Challenges True Authority (vv. 27-28)
 2. True Authority Counters False Authority (vv. 29-30)
 3. False Authority Evades True Authority (vv. 31-33a)
 4. True Authority Eschews False Authority (v. 33b)

False Authority Challenges True Authority (vv. 27-28)

- "They came again to Jerusalem": This was the third day of the Passion Week; Jesus had just cleansed the temple the previous day.
- "As He was walking in the temple": He was teaching while walking. Luke 20:1 says Jesus was "teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel." The merchants who had been driven out

the previous day did not dare to return with their cattle, sheep, and doves. The temple, having been cleansed by Jesus, had its order restored, and so Jesus could finally do some public teachings here to those who sincerely sought God.

- "The chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to Him": These three groups represented the religious authorities at the time and were the main members of the Sanhedrin. Under the system of the time, the Sanhedrin was the highest authority handling all affairs, and their decisions directly controlled the entire operation of Jewish society. Although there were many conflicts and differences among these groups, they had a common hatred against Jesus, for He directly threatened their leadership authority. That's why they came together here to challenge Jesus.
- "By what authority are You doing these things?": This could refer to all things Jesus had done; but more directly, it refers to what He had just done in the temple these couple days. He had just driven out the merchants, ruining their business, and He had been teaching openly in the temple, proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God. All these things directly challenged the authority of the religious leaders. Therefore, they questioned the source of Jesus' authority.

【Answer】 Jesus had already answered this question before. He said, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working" (John 5:17). His authority came from the Father, and the only authorization He needed was to seek the Father's will through prayer. He needn't consult anyone about anything. But the religious leaders rejected this answer, not due to any rational analysis of objective facts but because their own authority was threatened.

【Insight】 Unbelievers often reject Jesus because their own authority is threatened. They realize if they were to believe in Jesus, they could no longer "go their own way and let others say what they will." When their authority is threatened, they'll look for any excuse to reject Jesus.

【Background】 Under the system of the time, all rabbis needed to be certified by the Sanhedrin to teach, impart wisdom, and make decisions on various religious and civil matters within the designated scope of the Sanhedrin. Jesus never obtained any such certification, which they found entirely unacceptable.

John 12:19: "So the Pharisees said to one another, 'You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him.'"

【Application】 Christians must be wary of such errors. When unwilling to submit to the Bible, they may raise seemingly reasonable questions, often just to cover up a heart that does not want to submit. "Why must we do this? What's your biblical basis?" Not that the decisions of authority are always right, but such questioning often hides a heart unwilling to submit to authority.

True Authority Counters False Authority (vv. 29-30)

- "Jesus said to them, 'I will ask you one question...'" He didn't answer directly, but He did give guidance by asking a related question, so the students might think for themselves from another angle by thinking through this new question to arrive at the answer to their original question. This is a great teaching method that we can use in parenting, teaching, and discipling.

- "John's baptism...": This refers not just to the act of baptizing, but to John's entire ministry as represented by his baptism. This includes John's upright character, his bold proclamation of the message of repentance, and his testimony about Jesus (John 1:29-34).
- "Was it from heaven or from men?": John's ministry had public approval. Everyone recognized him as a prophet. Like the prophets of the Old Testament, he had a righteous life and preached a heart-piercing message of repentance. However, since John testified about Jesus, if one were to confess John's authority as from God, he must also confess Jesus' authority as from God. Conversely, to reject Jesus' authority, one must also reject John's authority and thus deny the universally accepted fact.

False Authority Evades True Authority (vv. 31-33a)

- "They began reasoning among themselves": They were trapped by Jesus' question and found themselves in a dilemma, with no correct way to respond. They probably wished they could retract their earlier question, but it was too late, so they reluctantly discussed their strategy.

【Insight】 When a sinner's wickedness is exposed, the most common reaction is to dodge, evade, or change the subject.

- "If we say...": They were so concerned about their authority, status, life, and reputation among the people, but had no concern for the truth. If they had a heart seeking truth, this question wouldn't be difficult at all. The evidence was abundant; what they needed to do was simple: accept John's testimony, confess Jesus' authority that He was sent by God, repent, and confess their sins. Was the question all that difficult, or did they make it difficult for themselves?

【Insight】 What hindered them from making the right judgment was their preconceived decision that they must reject Jesus. They didn't care about the truth; all they wanted was to defend their ruling authority. So, from the beginning, they marked Jesus as an enemy and rejected Him from the start.

2 Thessalonians 2:10-12: "...because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason, God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness."

Jesus' question could've guided them to find truth, but since they refused to receive the love of the truth, God "sent upon them a deluding influence," allowing them to remain in their folly.

- "We do not know": They chose to continue evading the question, refusing to see the obvious truth. This reveals the deceitfulness, hypocrisy, and dishonesty of human nature.

【Insight】 Evasion is a favorite tactic of sinners. They evade the obvious truth: they evade that God is the Lord deserving our wholehearted worship and service, and that they are insignificant, sinful, and in desperate need of God's mercy and salvation.

True Authority Eschews False Authority (v. 33b)

- "Jesus said to them, 'Nor will I tell you...'" I have nothing more to say to you. Why? Because it's useless to speak to someone who is fundamentally dishonest and refuses to face the truth; we have nothing more to discuss.

【Analogy】 Sometimes, communication with people is like this. You want to keep the conversation going, but the other person just wouldn't honestly face the issues you've raised. At some point, you just have to close your mouth and get back to your own business.

【Key Point】 Being rejected by man is a small thing, but being rejected by Jesus is an eternal disaster. Jesus has the authority to grant eternal life and to judge all sins. Accepting Jesus' authority brings the power of forgiveness and eternal life; rejecting His authority means facing His eternal judgment.

Summary application

1. **Gospel Application:** Accept Jesus' authority by placing His Word and His commands in the highest place of your life. Jesus' commands are not burdensome; with the Spirit-given heart that loves God and truth, you will find that His yoke is easy and His burden is light, for He will grant you the ability to obey Him by His divine authority.
2. **Application for Christian Growth:** Those who truly submit to Jesus' authority will display a gentle, humble, and patient attitude in their actions, rather than being harsh, rigid, stubborn, or prone to conflict. The latter type operates in a self-imposed authority, much like the religious leaders in our passage today. Why do some people come across as arrogant, rigid, and domineering in their actions? Because they act in a self-imposed authority and do not submit to Jesus' authority.

Four ways to get things done, in two categories: 1. Do it yourself: (a. Ask others, submit to others, never to hinder others. b. Disregard others, insist your way, only to please yourself.) 2. Have others do it: (a. Invite others, encourage others, respect others' willingness. b. Demand others, force others, morally intimidate others). **Pride chooses 1b and 2b, preferring 2b whenever possible; Humility chooses 1a and 2a, preferring 1a whenever possible.** Why is there such a difference? Ultimately, it is a matter of authority.