

Daily Bible Study

“A Challenge to Jesus’ Authority”

Mark 11:27 - 33

November 6– November 12, 2011

THE LORD’S DAY & MONDAY – We take for our text this week the last portion of **chapter 11** as we look specifically at **Mark 11:27-33**. In this text we find that Jesus’ authority to cleanse the temple, and everything else that He had been doing is challenged by the religious leaders and representatives of His day. They ask a two part question: First, *“By what authority are You doing these things and who gave You this authority to do these things?”* Interestingly, in return, Jesus asks them a single question, namely, *“The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men?”* Jesus is here referring to “the Baptist’s ministry” which was marked by the act of baptizing. This question embarrassed Jesus opponents as they realized that He, the very One they were trying to disgrace and destroy had been enthusiastically acclaimed by John the Baptist. So, they were in a very tight spot. If their answer was “from heaven,” they know Jesus would ask why they did not believe and follow him. The next option, answering that his baptism was from men might cause them harm from the people at large who counted the Baptist as a prophet of the most High God, which he in fact was. Luke mentions that they even feared being stoned by the people over their respect toward John. So they took what they thought was the “easy way out” and answered that they did not know. Jesus in turn refused to answer them their question concerning His authority. **Mark 11:27-33** *“Then they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to Him. And they said to Him, “By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?” But Jesus answered and said to them, “I also will ask you one question; then answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me.” And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ But if we say, ‘From men’ ”—they feared the people, for all counted John to have been a prophet indeed. So they answered and said to Jesus, “We do not know.” And Jesus answered and said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”*

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, teach me from Your Word this week and help me to recognize and submit myself under Your authority.

TUESDAY – **Mark 11:27-28** *“Then they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to Him. And they said to Him, “By*

what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?" If we are keeping the timetable down of this passion week in the life of Christ we remember that Jesus had entered the temple on the Sunday evening when He came into Jerusalem (**Mark 11:11**). He then also entered the Temple again on Monday at which time He cleansed it (**Mark 11:15**). And now, on the following day He again arrives in Jerusalem, and yet again enters the temple. He is walking in the temple here according to Mark and if we take the other evangelists writing in the synoptic Gospels we are told that Jesus was teaching when this confrontation arises. It was very customary for teachers to both walk and teach in this day and Jesus could very well be walking in what is known as Solomon's Porch (**John 10:23**) as He is teaching the people. As a side-note: "Solomon's porch" was an outer covered portion within the large Temple grounds and was most likely the last remaining part of King Solomon's building that remained in Jesus day. Regardless of exactly where in Temple grounds Jesus was we read that three groups of individuals come up to Him and question Him. The groups are: *the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders*. These three groups made up a ruling body known as the Sanhedrin; the 71 member, highest legal body in Judaism; the supreme court of Israel if you will. These three groups, or members of them, approach Jesus and it would appear that they were here officially; sent to deal with this issue by the greater body of the Sanhedrin. They get right to the point of their problem when they ask Jesus *By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?* They want to know what *authority (exousia)* "right" He has to do these things. There is also in this question the arrogant and condescending attitude of "show us your credentials" to do these things. The question is not respectful or honoring but instead is a "Who do you think you are?" kind of query. They are trying to embarrass Jesus and dishonor and discredit Him in front of the people. Many today want to put Jesus to the test by having Him answer this very same question. It is in a different context but it is the same prideful and stubborn issue; failure to humbly bow under and before the Sovereign Lord. Do you question God, demanding answers for everything He does in your life? Read **James 4:10**. As one commentator reminds us, we must humble ourselves continually in the presence of Him who alone is worthy to be exalted: recognizing His presence in all your ways, the truest incentive to humility. The tree, to grow upwards, must strike its roots deep downwards; so man, to be exalted, must have his mind deep-rooted in humility.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me trust, and believe You in all circumstances. Forgive me and save me from having the arrogant and proud rebellion against You that I am prone to.

WEDNESDAY – Mark 11:28 *"And they said to Him, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?"* As we continue to look at the questions that were posed to Jesus we must understand that it is not fair, honest questioning that the Lord has issue with but rather the attitude behind most questions to Him. When at times we

doubt and turn to God in question when faced with anxious moments He is ready and willing to answer us and build us up in our weak faith by His Word and Holy Spirit. Even in moments of temptation to sin in other areas excluding anxiety and doubting we need to turn to Christ and call out to Him for strength of mind and will to obey and trust Him (**Matthew 6:13**). These are matters of humbling ourselves under Him; You will either exalt yourself as “god” and sin and disobey, or you will humble yourself under His mighty hand and see Him as in perfect control and worthy of all allegiance and obedience. He will come to the aid of those who call out to Him in sincerely and honestly (Notice what God gives to the humble from **1 Peter 5:5b-6**). The *chief priests, the scribes, and the elders* were not humbly approaching Jesus with honest question but were trying to put Him in an awkward and humiliating position. If Jesus admitted that he had no credentials the people could be expected to lose respect for him. They also seem to think that if He considered himself authorized to do the things he had been doing, He would be arrogantly giving Himself the authority of none other but God alone. They knew His claims of Divinity and were outraged by them because they refused to bow and humbly repent and believe in Him (**John 5:18, John 8:58, John 10:30-33**). Those verses from John’s gospel are relevant today as well. This is the problem with the cults and all false religions as well as agnostic and atheist views as well. Regardless of what label you put on these groups, they all refuse to recognize Jesus for who He is and therefore they are cut off from salvation (**Hebrews 11:6**). Sadly, these men following Judaism in Jesus’ day were not interested in salvation, deliverance, and forgiveness of sin because that would demand of them honest admittance and repentance. Like today’s pseudo followers and “Christians” they wanted a Jesus and God of their own making; one that is manageable, conformable, and subservient to their desires. Read this amazing text: **John 5:31-45**.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, forgive me for not humbling myself under You as I ought even as Your child. Holy Spirit, please cultivate humility in me through the power of Sacred Scripture.

THURSDAY – Mark 11:29-30 “But Jesus answered and said to them, “I also will ask you one question; then answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me.” The use of counter questions was common in rabbinic discussions (**Mark 10:2–3**). Jesus’ use of a counter question was not to evade but it was a means of establishing the source of his own *authority*. It actually establishes His place of being in *all authority*. After all, John the Baptist proclaimed the Coming One from God (**Mark 1:1–4**) and at the baptism of Jesus the voice of God the Father answered their question about *authority* (‘*You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased...* **Mark 1:11**). No further answer was needed. Furthermore; the expression “*The baptism of John*” embraces John’s preaching of repentance as a prerequisite of forgiveness. The clear intention of Jesus in His question is to point out the fact that the Baptists ministry was of Divine authorization. Bottom line, if John’s message had God’s approval, then Jesus and His message also had to have Divine

authority because of John's Holy Spirit inspired proclamation. Another way of saying it in our vernacular would be, "Do you think God was behind John's mission or not?" If they recognized the God given *authority* of John's mission, they would be forced to recognize Jesus' *authority* and see His cleansing of the temple, among other things as the legitimate exercise of that *authority*. We see the sovereign exercise of Jesus *authority* (*exousia*) as God in that final simple portion, *Answer Me*.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, thank you for being such a powerful and loving God. Jesus, I praise You for showing me what Godly authority and love for sinners looks like.*

FRIDAY & SATURDAY – Mark 11:31-33 *“And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ But if we say, ‘From men’ ”—they feared the people, for all counted John to have been a prophet indeed. So they answered and said to Jesus, “We do not know.” And Jesus answered and said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”* Jesus question to these men proved to be too much for them. This was a huge dilemma. They clearly saw that either way they answered; “*from heaven*” or “*from men*” would place them in a very difficult position. If they in fact admit John's Divine authority they would be forced to believe in Jesus. If they denied John's Divine authority they would be placed in a very unfavorable position with the people who obviously and wholeheartedly accepted John as a true prophet of Yahweh. So again because of their sinful pride and refusal to bow before Jesus, they pleaded ignorance and inability to answer which basically was equal to a refusal to answer. What they did not realize was that such inability and or refusal actually disqualified them from being religious authorities at all (this is still a requirement for modern day leaders—see **Titus 1:9**). So Jesus' reply was that He too would refuse to answer their question; at least directly because in fact He had given them the answer, although veiled, in His counter question. As one commentator put it; Although Jesus refused to tell, he did not refuse to claim. The claim of divine *authority* is as clear as if it had been stated explicitly. An important, practical lesson is that these men failed to see because they hardened themselves against truth. This is true today. Many people know little of Jesus and the joy of the Christian life because of refusal to submit themselves to His will. May we pray, *“Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God” (Psalm 143:10).*

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, help me to be submissive and obedient to Your will and authority.*