

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for September 17, 2017

Mark 11:27-33
The Authority of Jesus

I. The dare (11:27-28)

And 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 they said to him, "By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?"

"And they came again to Jerusalem."

- They came to Jerusalem "again" as was their custom during Passion Week

"And as he was walking in the temple,"

● The temple courts were probably looking a little different since Jesus' attack yesterday
"the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him,"

- Three groups united to approach Jesus
 - Chief priests, scribes and elders
 - These are all the categories of people that make up the Sanhedrin
 - Sanhedrin presided over religious matters for the Palestinian Jews

"and they said to him, 'By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?'"

- This appears to be a challenge that is tantamount to saying, "Who do you think you are?"
- They ask what Jesus has done to earn such authority to attack the temple
- They also ask who gave Jesus the authority to attack the temple
- The irony is that Jesus is amply qualified on both levels
 - Jesus has performed countless miracles
 - God gave Jesus authority as His own Son (Baptism and Transfiguration)

II. The demand (11:29-30)

29 Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. 30 Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me."

"Jesus said to them, 'I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.'"

- Jesus does not engage on their level to answer their stupid questions
- Jesus returns a response in the form of a question that demands an answer
- If they could answer this question, then Jesus would tell them of the authority He has to attack the temple

“Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me.”

- Jesus recalls back to the baptism of John, why?
 - For one, John the Baptist’s ministry was in Judea and they would be aware of it
 - Even more so, however, John’s baptism recalls the beginning of Jesus’ ministry over the past 3 years
- Jesus asks them to answer whether or not John’s ministry was valid
- Again, Jesus is choosing to align Himself with John the Baptist and his ministry

III. The dilemma (11:31-32)

31 And they discussed it with one another, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ 32 But shall we say, ‘From man?’—they were afraid of the people, for they all held that John really was a prophet.

“And they discussed it with one another, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’”

- These Jerusalem leaders had to discuss with one another their options for answering
- The first part of their dilemma stems from affirming the authenticity of John’s ministry
- If they affirmed John’s ministry as being from God, then they would look like terrible leaders because they did not believe or follow him
- If they affirmed John, then this conversation would not be happening because they would also believe in the authority of Christ

“But shall we say, ‘From man?’—they were afraid of the people, for they all held that John really was a prophet.”

- The second part of their dilemma stems from shortchanging John’s ministry
- This was in fact the truth of what these religious leaders thought about John the Baptist
- However, for them to take such a stance would mean falling out of favor with the people
 - Luke 20:6 “But if we say, ‘From man,’ all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet.”
- The people were convinced John the Baptist was a prophetic presence from God
 - And the people were right!
 - Luke records the miraculous announcement of John’s birth
 - John and his ministry appeared after a lengthy period of silence for the Jewish people (~400 years)

IV. The disappointment (11:33)

33 So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

“So they answered Jesus, ‘We do not know.’”

- After all the discussion amongst the brightest and the best of the Jews, they came up with a most disappointing and pathetic answer, “We do not know”
- They found themselves in a catch 22 and they did not want to look foolish

- Ultimately, these men were unwilling to accept John's authority, because if they did that, then they would have to accept Jesus' authority
- They most certainly did not want to submit to the authority of Jesus
- They also did not want to lose their favor and standing with the people
- Their genius response was the ever profound, "We don't know"

"And Jesus said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.'"

- Why does Jesus refuse to answer their question?
 - On the one hand, if they answered Jesus' question honestly about John, then they would get their answer from Jesus regarding His authority
 - Even the people recognized the authority John had from God
 - Thus, it should have been simple to recognize that Jesus had the same authority from God
 - On the other hand, this was consistent with Jesus' treatment of those who should have known better
 - The fact that the religious leaders were even asking and challenging Jesus at this point in His earthly ministry is laughable
 - Also, this is how Jesus responded to the Pharisees back in Mark 8:11-13 (They demanded a sign and He refused to give it to them)
 - They had lost the privilege of conversation from the Messiah