

Matthew 21:23-27: & when he entered the temple, the chief priests & the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, & said, "By what authority are you doing these things, & who gave you this authority?"²⁴ Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you one question, & if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things."²⁵ The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?" & they discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?'"²⁶ But if we say, 'From man,' we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet."²⁷ So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." & he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

Intro: Two weeks ago, we saw Jesus, the God-Man, curse the fig tree, giving an illustration of His curse on Israel's ungodliness, sin, & hypocritical religion. Jesus encourages His disciples to pursue true, genuine, & vital religion through faith & prayer. Jesus hates hypocrisy & wants us to pursue true heart worship & genuine, godly religion.

- **John 15:4-5, 8-11:** Abide in me, & I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me & I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing . . .⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit & so prove to be my disciples.⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments & abide in his love.¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

- **John Piper:** It is trusting in Jesus, remaining in fellowship with Jesus, connecting to Jesus so that all that God is for us in him is flowing like a life-giving sap into our lives. That's number one: abiding is believing, trusting, savoring, resting, receiving . . . Abiding in the vine means receiving and believing and trusting in the words of Jesus. It means receiving the love of Jesus for the Father and for his people and the joy that Jesus has in the Father and in us. It means sharing the joy, the love, the words with Jesus.

Today, we see the religious leaders of Jesus' day question His authority, & Jesus responds by asking them a question they can't answer, revealing the true state of their sinful hearts & Jesus' supreme knowledge & authority.

You don't question Jesus' authority: He holds highest seniority, He alone is the majority, in everything He is superiority, & submission to Him is always your first priority.

What is authority? The right and power to command (to give orders), enforce laws, enforce obedience, or judge.

- Parents have authority: **Colossians 3:20:** Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

- You're under authority at **school**; in your **job**; in **government**: **Rom. 13:1-2:** Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, & those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, & those who resist will incur judgment.

- You're under authority in the **church**: **Hebrews 13:17:** Obey your leaders & submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy & not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. **(Who is your greatest authority?)**

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1. Wicked Authorities Question Jesus' Godly Authority

Matthew 21:23: And when he entered the temple, the chief priests & the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, & said, "By what authority are you doing these things, & who gave you this authority?"

a. Jesus was exercising powerful, other-worldly, godly authority: 1) Jesus' teaching had powerful, other-worldly authority: **Matthew 7:28:** And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching,²⁹ for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

2) Jesus' actions had powerful, other-worldly authority: Matt 9:6-8: "that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"- he then said to the paralytic -"Rise, pick up your bed & go home." & he rose & went home. When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, & they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

3) Jesus cleansing the temple, healing, & cursing the fig tree demonstrate a powerful, other-worldly authority.

b. The Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' day question His authority: "Where are you from? Where did you get this authority? Who gave you this authority? Who do you think you are?" They don't know who Jesus is!

c. Jesus showed them & told them Who He is, & He told them where His authority came from:

John 8:23-29: He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. ²⁴ I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins." ²⁵ So they said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. ²⁶ I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him." ²⁷ They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father. ²⁸ So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. ²⁹ And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him."

d. Wicked authorities hate Jesus because of His divine authority: There are wicked people who have authority!

John 8:48-59: The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan & have a demon?" Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, & you dishonor me. Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, & he is the judge. Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.' Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? & the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?" Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.' But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him & I keep his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it & was glad." So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, & have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

Robert Stein: His authority to cast out demons, to offer the kingdom of God to outcasts, to give the definitive interpretation of the sacred Scriptures, to present Himself as Israel's King, to judge the temple, to offer Himself as a ransom for many, and so on comes from God.

God Himself said to Jesus: "The is My beloved Son with Whom I am well pleased!"

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2. Jesus Authoritatively Questions The Heart

Matthew 21:24-25: Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you one question, & if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵ The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?"

a. Jesus is the authority in this interview/interrogation: Jesus is the one asking the questions here! This is Jesus' show – He does the question asking! Jesus is in complete control here! His boldness demonstrates His authority!

Job 40:6-12: Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind & said: "Dress for action like a man; I will

question you, & you make it known to me. Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be in the right? Have you an arm like God, & can you thunder with a voice like his? Adorn yourself with majesty & dignity; clothe yourself with glory & splendor. Pour out the overflowings of your anger, & look on everyone who is proud & abase him. Look on everyone who is proud & bring him low & tread down the wicked where they stand.”

b. Jesus asks a question that reveals what’s in the heart of these religious leaders: Jesus asks them where John’s baptism came from, from heaven or from men? He’s asking what they believe about John’s ministry. Jesus aims at the heart. Jesus exposes the heart. Jesus exposes sin in the heart. Jesus is after your heart!

D. A. Carson: He does not raise this question as a simple rebuke – as if to say that if the authorities cannot make up their minds about John, neither will they be able to do so about him. His question is far more profound. If the religious authorities rightly answer it, they will already have the correct answer to their own question. If they respond, “From heaven,” then they are morally bound to believe John – & John pointed to Jesus. They would, therefore, have their answer about Jesus & his authority. If they respond, “From men”, they offer the wrong answer – but they will not dare utter it for fear of the people.

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3. The Cowardly Hearts Of Sinners Who Reject Jesus’ Authority

Matthew 21:25-27: And they discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?'" ²⁶ But if we say, 'From man,' we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet." ²⁷ So they answered Jesus, "We do not know."

a. These Jewish leaders refuse to acknowledge that John’s authority was from God: They refuse to acknowledge that John’s baptism was from heaven. They refuse to acknowledge that John was a prophet sent from God, calling God’s people to repent & prepare the way of the LORD – to prepare the way for Jesus! Jesus called John the greatest man born of women! But they don’t believe John! They don’t believe Jesus! And they don’t believe God! They reject John’s authority; they reject Jesus’ authority; & they reject God’s authority!

b. These Jewish leaders are paralyzed by the fear of man: They won’t say what they really believe because they are afraid! If they answer Jesus & say John’s baptism was from man, they fear causing trouble with the crowd because the crowd believes John was a prophet.

- **Proverbs 29:25:** The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.

c. We see the ignorance & foolishness of rejecting God’s authority: Verse 27: So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." (**Psalm 14:1:** The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good.) Friend, how have you rejected God’s authority? **GOSPEL!**

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4. The Deafening Silence Of Jesus’ Authority

Matthew 21:27: And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

a. Jesus refuses to answer their question: God is silent! God is silent & resists us when we come to Him in arrogant pride, questioning His authority: **1 Peter 5:5:** God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Every question doesn’t need to be answered. Every question doesn’t deserve an answer: **Luke 16:31:** If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.

b. Jesus' infinite wisdom demonstrates His absolute authority: Proverbs 26:4: Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself.

Colossians 2:2-3: Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

c. We must come to God in humility: Psalm 28:1-2: To you, O LORD, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me, lest, if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit. Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy . . .

d. Though we have all rebelled against God's authority, we can hope in God's mercy because there was a place God was silent when His own Son cried out to Him on that cross: "My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me!" (He died & rose again!)

5. We Must Submit To Jesus' Authority And It Is Our Joy To Submit To Jesus' Authority

a. In Christ we are enable & empowered to obey & submit to Jesus' authority as our greatest joy: We are united to Him Who has all authority! His authoritative law is written on our hearts! His authoritative Holy Spirit dwells in us! We have been authoritatively adopted into His authoritative family! God is our Father!

b. Our joy is to obey all that Jesus has commanded & point others to Him as well: Matthew 28:18-20: And Jesus came & said to them, "All authority in heaven & on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore & make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father & of the Son & of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. & behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

c. Our joy is to be content in all that Jesus has ordained for us: Psalm 139:16: All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. **(Romans 8:28)**

Elisabeth Elliot: He makes us wait. He keeps us on purpose in the dark. He makes us walk when we want to run, sit still when we want to walk, for He has things to do in our souls that we are not interested in.

Hymn: Whate'er my God ordains is right; His holy will abideth
I will be still whate'er He does; And follow where He guideth
He is my God, though dark my road; He holds me that I shall not fall
And so to Him I leave it all; And so to Him I leave it all!

d. Children, it should be your joy to submit to & obey your parents because when you do, you are submitting & obeying Jesus!

e. Our joy is to submit to & obey our employers & teachers & pastors/elders because when we do, we are submitting & obeying Jesus!

Today, we see the religious leaders of Jesus' day question His authority, & Jesus responds by asking them a question they can't answer, revealing the true state of their sinful hearts & Jesus' supreme knowledge & authority.

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**Jesus Owns All Authority On High
False Teachers' Evil Tongues He'd Tie
Then Speak The Truth & For Us Die!**

Authority is the right and power to command
To Whom will you bow and not withstand

Christ the King rules every land
All other powers are sinking sand
His Kingdom's rule will ever expand
So turn from self-rule and what you've planned
Submit to Him and give your hand
To do with joy His command
His death was just – God's right demand
He rose alive in glory grand
And now if you by faith will stand
You'll enter in the promised land!

Who will you, above all, obey?
That's your king no matter what you say
The greatest king that makes us stray
Is our king-self that we must slay
Now put king-self to death and say:
“My Christ is all! - For all He'd pay!”
He died and rose on the third day!
To take your wicked sin away
And be the King you will obey
He'll never let you go astray
But gives His mercy full display
In your new life He is the way!

They come to God and want to question
Instead they should bow and make confession
All authority's in His possession
He raised the dead – a bold impression
He said, “I AM!” - His God expression
He forgave sins – that's only God's discretion
He has all power but no oppression
He can save from all aggression
And heal your every paralyzing depression
He'll save from every evil transgression
He ever lives to make intercession
His aim is to be your greatest obsession!

Jesus responds – I will question you
Like God said to Job, now brace for what's true
Stand back my friends – don't mess with this Jew!
He won't answer the fool like we often do
He reveals their cowardly hearts that He knew
And shows that they must be born anew!

God is silent to those full of pride
In humility bow – set self aside
He loves the humble with arms open wide
His mercy is free to all who abide
By faith in Him – in His mercy hide
For God was silent to Christ when He cried:
“My God! My God! You've left My side!”

Oh the sad silence when Jesus died
But God raised Him up – all mercies supplied
God's silence is broken for all worldwide
So trust in Him now and be His pure bride
He'll save you forever – your needs He'll provide
And fill you with joy that no one can hide!

Christ Jesus Reigns, Owning All Authority
In Everything He Bleeds Superiority
Don't Question Him For He's Right In The Majority
He's Everlasting With Utmost Seniority
Yet He Died On That Cross And Was Counted Inferiority
Bearing God's Wrath In Horrific Deteriority
But Rose Up From The Dead With All Superiority
Saving From Every Nation: The All And The Minority
So Trust In Him As Your First Priority
And Bow Down To His God-Man Authority
Who Is Himself Our Joy Superiority!

You don't question Jesus' authority: He holds highest seniority, He alone is the majority, in everything He is superiority, & submission to Him is always your first priority.