



“By What Authority?”

Luke 20:1-8

Dec. 17, 2023

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- Here they come again - the leaders of the perverse man-made system of self-righteousness.
- This in all likelihood is the Sanhedrin.
- Jesus is such a threat to their system, they just can't leave Him alone until He is dead.

John 10:18

18 "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.

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"authority" – εξουσία – jurisdiction, right, authority.

- In their system, authority was big. Chief Priest, Priests, Sanhedrin, Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots, Rabbis. This was all in a hierarchy of authority. You did nothing unless you were given the authority to do it by someone else.
- That's why they were constantly quoting others – "Rabbi _____ said this", "Rabbi _____ said that"
- You had no authority in and of yourself.
- So they lived in a closed system.
- It is into that world that Jesus came.
- Jesus is an outsider and He attacks their system and exposes it.

"these things" – overturning the tables of corruption.

- This hit them in their pocketbook. Money is always a factor in false religion.

2 and they spoke, saying to Him, "Tell us by what authority You are doing these things, or who is the one who gave You this authority?"

So if Jesus just came and said some things attacking their system, they could dismiss it. But the problem were the miracles –

Jesus has raised the dead.

Jesus has healed lepers.

He has given sight to the blind.

He has cast out demons.

He has made lame to walk.

He has caused those with hemorrhages to heal.

And . . .

He has borne witness to His fulfillment of the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

John has pointed to Him and said, "He's the Messiah!"

- They really are saying to Jesus, "Who do you think you are?"
- Of course this is a trap – If Jesus says God, that is blasphemy. If He says man, He discredits His Messiahship.

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John 5:19-23

19 Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.

20 "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel.

21 "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.

22 "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son,

23 so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

Matt 28:18-19

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,

3 Jesus answered and said to them, "I will also ask you a question, and you tell Me:

- To answer this question , Jesus asks them a question.
- Typical way in Jewish culture to answer a question.
- There are many ways Jesus could have answered it.
- But this answer is genius.

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4 "Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?"

- What Jesus is saying here is, "Look, you flunked the first test on authority, why ask it again.
- Jesus effectively ties Himself to John.
- By doing that they are either going to have to say they are both from God or they from men.
- John's baptism was for repentance resulting in the forgiveness of sin, and you rejected it.

Matt 3:5-7

- 5 Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan;
- 6 and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.
- 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

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- Was John's baptism from God or was it a man-made invention?
- If they say it was from God, then they have incriminated themselves for not repenting and being baptized.

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6 "But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet."

- If they say it was from men, then they will bring the wrath of the people upon them, because the people believe that John was a prophet sent by God.
- If you reject the prophet, you reject God and you will be stoned.

7 So they answered that they did not know where it came from.

- So this puts them on the “horns of a dilemma”.
- They had to be real careful going down that road and where it could end up.
- “What do you mean you don’t know??”
- “You guys are the head honchos and you don’t know.”
- Really, this exposed them. The people should be furious. “We are supposed to trust you and your back-breaking religion of laws and rules for eternal life, and you can’t even come up with the answer to a simple question.”
- The fact of the matter is that man-made religion has no answers to the simple questions of life:

Who am I?

Where did I come from?

Where am I going?

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Application

1. Who is the final authority over your life? your experience, your feelings, your wisdom, or ???
2. Who is the final authority over your church? tradition, document, pastor, board of elders, denomination, or ???
3. Generally, the only way to expose a false religious system, is with the Word of God. It may have to come from the outside of the system.
4. Usually false religious systems have built in safe-guards to prevent exposure to the truth.

8 And Jesus said to them, "Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

- Jesus is saying, "If you can't solve the issue you have with John, you will never solve the issue you have with me."
- John was a fork in the road to the Jewish leaders. He proclaimed Jesus was the Messiah. If He was from God, then Jesus was the Messiah and we need to bow down and submit to Him.