

## Introduction

When we started the Connection Church of Albuquerque, I went to Nusenda to open up a bank account. The bank required documentation showing that we were a New Mexico corporation, and that we were a legitimate 501c3 non-profit organization. They also required a letter from the board of directors authorizing the opening of the account. So, Tom and I wrote a letter on behalf of the board, signed it, and gave it to the manager. They wanted to know by what authority I was opening up this bank account.

This week, we were notified by the Discover Card that there was suspicious activity on our credit card and to contact them. We called their 800 number and spoke with the representative and reviewed all the activity. There was a charge for Domino's Pizza for \$47 and another at the Metropolitan Transportation for \$200. We did not authorize those charges and so the representative removed those from our account. They closed down our account and issued new cards to us. Someone had somehow got our name and credit card information and was using it in a fraudulent and unauthorized manner. We are grateful that the Discover Card asked if these charges were authorized by us. They needed to know if the person using our card had been given authority.

In our text today, Jesus is asked, "By what authority are You doing these things?" The things the chief priests and scribes and elders were referring to were the things that Jesus had done the day before at the temple. He had driven out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. Then, He had taught them about the purpose of His temple. He said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations." He also charged them with making it a robbers' den.

(Mark 11:15-17) "Then they \*came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves; {16} and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. {17} And He *began* to teach and say to them, "Is it not written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS'? But you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN."

The response in the temple was very mixed. The crowd of people was astonished at His teaching. There may have been as many as two or three million people in Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover, so it was probably a large crowd. Mark said the crowd was astonished. Luke records that the people were hanging on to every word Jesus said. On the other hand, the chief priests, scribes, and leading men were trying to destroy Him. The religious leaders wanted to destroy Him, but they were afraid of Him, and they were afraid of alienating the crowd. So, the context of our passage today is that these religious leaders are looking for a way to destroy Jesus. They are angry about what Jesus has done, and they are wanting to know by what authority He has done these things. They had certainly not given Him that authority.

(Mark 11:18) "The chief priests and the scribes heard *this*, and *began* seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching."

(Luke 19:47-48) "And He was teaching daily in the temple; but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him, {48} and they

could not find anything that they might do, for all the people were hanging on to every word He said.”

Jesus responded to their question by asking another question. He told them He would answer their question if they would answer one question. He asked them, “Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?” They were caught between a rock and a hard spot. If they responded how they wanted to respond, the crowd would be against them, because they believed that John was a prophet. If they said that John’s baptism was from God, then they would have to agree with John’s message, that Jesus was the Messiah. So, the religious leaders said, “We do not know.” And, Jesus said to the, “Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things.” Neither of the questions were answered.

We will look at the religious leaders’ question about authority, Jesus’ question about the baptism of John, and the questions that were not answered. Finally, we will look at the application for our life.

### **Jesus' Source of Authority**

1. Question About Authority
  2. Question About the Baptism of John
  3. Unanswered Questions
- Conclusion and Applications

(Mark 11:27-33) “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.’”

#### **1. Question About Authority**

Jesus came again to Jerusalem. He has been staying in Bethany, presumably with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. He would go to Jerusalem each morning and return in the evening. Bethany was just under two miles away. In John 11:18, we read that Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off. The KJV says Bethany was about fifteen furlongs off. The Greek word used is stadion, which means a measure of distance used in a stadium or race-course. It was about 9,090 feet, so it is just under two miles. At a good fast walk, it would take about thirty to forty minutes.

(Mark 11:27) “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,”

(John 11:18) “Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off;”

(John 11:18 KJV) “Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off:”

Jesus came again. On Palm Sunday, He triumphantly entered Jerusalem and people threw their coats and palm branches on the street. He entered the temple, looked around and then left for Bethany. (Mark 11:1-11) On Monday, Jesus cursed the fig tree, and then went on in to Jerusalem and drove out those who were buying and selling, and overturned the tables of the money-changers. (Mark 11:12-19) By most scholars, this is Tuesday, and Jesus has just spoken to His disciples about the fig tree and praying with faith. And, they are once again entering into Jerusalem, and they went into the temple. Jesus had the welcoming committee waiting for Him, and as soon as He arrived, they came to Him. They were ready to confront Jesus. They had their question ready to ask, and they were going to try to destroy Him. They asked Jesus, "By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?"

(Mark 11:28) "and *began* saying to Him, "By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?"

This is not the first discussion about authority. In Mark 1:27, Jesus had cast out an unclean spirit and people were amazed and said, "What is this? A new teaching with authority!"

(Mark 1:27) "They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him."

In Mark 2, a paralytic was brought to Jesus' home and lowered through the roof. Jesus told the paralytic that his sins are forgiven. The scribes were there reasoning in their heart that Jesus was blaspheming, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Then, Jesus told them, "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven' or to say 'Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk?' But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, He said to the paralytic, 'I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home.'" Jesus told them that He was the Son of Man, and He had authority to forgive sins and to heal paralytics. They knew that no one could forgive sins but God, so Jesus had made it clear to them that He was God; He was the Messiah.

(Mark 2:8-11) "Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, \*said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? {9} "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, 'Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk'? {10} "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—He \*said to the paralytic, {11} "I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home."

Later on in Mark 2, Jesus had another run in with the Pharisees about His disciples eating some heads of grain as they walked along a grainfield. He concluded His conversation with them, saying, "So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." Again, He had authority over the Law of the Sabbath.

(Mark 2:28) "So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

In Mark 3, Jesus appointed the twelve apostles and gave them authority to heal and to cast out demons. You have to have authority to give authority to others. Then, the scribes accused Jesus of being possessed by Beelzebul and casting out the demons by the ruler of the demons. They

accused Him of operating under the authority of Satan. Jesus corrected their logic saying, "How can Satan cast out Satan?" Then, He spoke to them about how a divided kingdom will not stand.

(Mark 3:22-24) "The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons." {23} And He called them to Himself and began speaking to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? {24} "If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand."

So, Jesus has already told them that He is the Son of Man and had authority to heal, forgive, cast out demons, and was God. He told them the Father had sent Him and that He did nothing on His own initiative. He had already told them where His authority had come; it came from the Father.

(John 5:30) "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

## 2. Question About the Baptism of John

The second question was by Jesus in His reply to the religious leaders. He said to them that He would tell them by what authority He was doing these things if they will answer one question, "Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men?"

(Mark 11:29-30) "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."

Let's look at the baptism of John for a few minutes. In Mark's account, a voice came out of the heavens saying, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well pleased." There were lots of people who witnessed this event. John's disciples were there, and the twelve apostles were also there. It was clear from Mark's account that Jesus was the Son of God.

(Mark 1:9-11) "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. {10} Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; {11} and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."

In Luke's account, we find that when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized. So, that confirms that there were lots of other people being baptized. Luke records the same thing, "a voice came out of heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.'" Again, the baptism of Jesus clearly identified Jesus as the Son of God, and that God was well pleased with Jesus. The religious leaders were not well pleased, but the Father was well-pleased.

(Luke 3:21-22) "Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, {22} and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."

In Matthew's account, we find that John tried to prevent Jesus from being baptized, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" Jesus told him to permit it at this time, to fulfill all righteousness. When Jesus was baptized, the heavens opened up, and a voice

out of heaven said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." So, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all say exactly the same thing, that a voice came out of heaven declaring and identifying Jesus as the Son of God, and that God was well-pleased with Him.

(Matt 3:13-17) "Then Jesus \*arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. {14} But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" {15} But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he \*permitted Him. {16} After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, {17} and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

In John's account, we have a little more information. John declared that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. John also declared that Jesus had a higher rank and existed before him. John declared that God had told him that when he saw the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven and remaining upon Him, it was a confirmation that this was the Son of God. John's account does not mention the voice out of heaven, but it does give the witness of the Holy Spirit and John's witness that Jesus is the Son of God.

(John 1:29-34) "The next day he \*saw Jesus coming to him and \*said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! {30} This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.' {31} I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water." {32} John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. {33} "I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' {34} "I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."

One thing that all four accounts are very clear about is that Jesus was identified as the Son of God when He was baptized by John. The question that Jesus asked the religious leaders revealed Jesus' source of authority, and gave them the choice of accepting or rejecting Jesus as the Messiah. The scribes and Pharisees did not want to accept Jesus as the Son of God; they wanted control and power, not truth. They were not searching for truth; they were looking for a way to find grounds to accuse Him of blasphemy so that they could put Him to death. Jesus' question put them between a rock and a hard spot.

### 3. Unanswered Questions

When Jesus asked them about the baptism of Jesus, they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Then why did you not believe him?'" If they said that John's baptism was from men, the people would turn against them. So, they answered that they did not know. They refused to answer Jesus' question.

(Mark 11:27-33) "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.'"

The religious leaders were not accepting the testimony of John that Jesus was the Son of God. They had also not accepted the ministry of John. In Luke 7 we read that the people and sinners were baptized with the baptism of John, which was a baptism of repentance, but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves and were not baptized. They did not accept the baptism of Jesus by John, and they did not accept John's ministry of baptism, which was for repentance. They were self-righteous and did not see their own need for repentance. Most importantly, they did not want to answer because John clearly proclaimed that Jesus was the Messiah.

(Luke 7:29-30) "When all the people and the tax collectors heard *this*, they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John. {30} But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John."

Notice that Jesus also did not answer their question. He told them that He would answer their question if they answered His question. Since they did not answer His question, He did not answer their question about where He received the authority to do what He was doing.

(Mark 11:-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.'"

In reality, Jesus did answer their question. John's ministry was to prepare the way of the Lord. John's message was that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. John preached that Jesus existed before Him. John proclaimed that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus gave the religious leaders the key to unlocking the answer of their question, and that key was John.

## Conclusion and Applications

Question that every person must ask is whether Jesus is the Son of God or was He just a man? If you believe that He is God's Son and that He was sent here, He had all authority and has all authority. The religious leaders rode the fence and did not answer Jesus. They refused to confess Jesus as Lord. Riding the fence is a not a decision to make Christ the Lord of your life. It may seem okay, but it will end up in an eternal separation from God. If you believe that the baptism of Jesus was from God, and not from men, then the declaration at the baptism that Jesus is the Son of God, gave Him the authority to do what He did. If He is the Son of God, the real question is are we going to reject Him or receive Him as Lord. One day all of us will stand before God, and the question is whether we have confessed and made Jesus as Lord of our lives. In Hebrews 9:27, God tells us that it was "appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment." At the time of judgment, those who have not received and confessed Jesus as Lord will be judged and cast into the place of eternal damnation, prepared for the devil and his angels. It will be too late at that time to change your decision.

(Heb 9:27) "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment,"

None of us know when that time is up. When we lived in Orlando, Karen had two friends that she was reaching out to. Her friend, Judy, was Catholic. Her other friend, Patty, did not appear to

have any religious affiliation. Karen was purposely reaching out to both of these ladies. We had six children at that time and Karen was pretty busy raising six children and homeschooling the oldest three, but, she made time to reach out relationally to these two ladies. Both Judy and Patty also had small children, so they tried to find things to do together, like go to the park. One day, Karen received a call and was told that Patty had been in an accident and rolled her Ford Bronco. She and her two children were all killed. Patty was in her early thirties, and to our knowledge, she had never received Christ into her life. Unfortunately, she will not have a second chance to make Jesus her Lord.

I want to end this morning with a parable that Jesus told in Matthew 22 about a king giving a wedding feast for His Son. This comes right after Matthew's account about the question of His authority, so it is a fitting way to close. In this parable, many people were invited by the King to the feast, and many people rejected the invitation. They were too busy with their farms and businesses to attend the wedding feast. The King was enraged, so He ordered His servants to go to the highways and invite everyone to the feast. His servants did this and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests.

(Matt 22:7-10) "But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. {8} Then he \*said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. {9} 'Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find *there*, invite to the wedding feast.' {10} "Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests."

When the King came to look over the dinner guests, there was a man there not dressed in wedding clothes. The King asked him, "Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?" Then, the King had him bound hand and foot and thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

(Matt 22:11-14) "But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, {12} and he \*said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And the man was speechless. {13} Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' {14} "For many are called, but few *are* chosen."

All of us have sinned and our garments are as filthy rags. When we place our trust in Christ, He enters into a covenant with us. Jesus became sin so that we could be clothed in His righteousness. The only way that we can come to the wedding feast is to be clothed in righteousness. As John the Baptist proclaimed, Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. We have to believe in Christ and put our trust in Him now, before the day of the wedding feast. It will be too late at that time.

(2 Cor 5:21) "He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

God is not pushy, and He does not make anyone follow Him; He gives a choice to all of us. What is your choice this morning? To refuse to answer the question is a choice not to make Jesus the

Lord of your life. That is why Paul said in the previous verse, "we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

(2 Cor 5:20) "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

If you would like to receive Christ this morning, let me ask you two questions. Do you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that He died and rose from the dead? Second, are you willing to confess Jesus as Lord of your life? If so, join me in praying.

"Father God, thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to come and take away my sins. Thank You for raising Him from the dead. I believe, and I confess Jesus as Lord of my life this morning. Jesus, thank You for becoming my Lord and clothing me in righteousness. Amen. Before we end this morning, I want to look at one more application. Our passage today was about the source of Jesus' authority. It was an important question for the religious leaders. They were not happy about what Jesus was doing, and they wanted to know by what authority He was cleansing the temple and other things. There are two kingdoms: a kingdom of light and a kingdom of darkness. Jesus came and preached the kingdom of God. He was sent by the Father to reconcile us to God by paying the penalty for our sins. After Jesus had been crucified and had risen from the dead, He met with the apostles. He told them, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." Jesus had all authority and He was giving you and I some things to do under His authority. He was commissioning us, and that is why this is called the Great Commission. He has charged us with preaching the gospel and making disciples of all the nations. He has commanded us to baptize people in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, and to teach people God's word.

(Matt 28:18-20) "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, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, {20} teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

There are two kingdoms at work. When you and I are doing the things that Jesus has commanded us to do, we will find resistance from the kingdom of darkness. Our question today is of utmost significance. We need to know that we are operating under God's authority. The seven sons of Sceva in Acts 19:11-16 were trying to do the work of God without being under God's authority. The demons in the kingdom of darkness recognized that they had no authority and leaped on them, subdued them, and overpowered them. Having the authority to do kingdom business is a serious thing. Our authority starts with our relationship with Christ. But, being under proper authority is more than just being a believer. Being under God's authority also means that we need to be under proper spiritual authority here on earth. We need to be submitted to the elders in a local church. This morning, are you part of a local church? Are you submitted to the leaders of that church? If you are not under proper authority, I want to give you an opportunity to connect with us at the Connection Church of Albuquerque. If that is your desire, then let me know this morning.

**Introduction** (Mark 11:15-18, Luke 19:47-48, Mark 11:27-33)

**1. Question About Authority** (John 11:18, Mark 11:27, 11:1-11, 11:12-19, 11:28, 1:27, 2:8-11, 2:28, 3:22-24, John 5:30)

**2. Question About the Baptism of John** (Mark 11:29-30, 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22, Matt 3:13-17, John 1:29-34)

**3. Unanswered Questions** (Mark 11:27-33, Luke 7:29-30)

**Conclusion and Applications** (Heb 9:27, Matt 22:1-14, 2 Cor 5:20-21, Matt 28:18-20, Acts 19:11-16)