BY WHAT AUTHORITY ARE YOU DOING THESE THINGS?

Mark 11:27-33

Key Verse 28

“By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you authority to do this?”

**Introduction**



Americans are hard wired to question and challenge authorities. Our nation was born in a revolution that threw off an unwanted authority, and we have been throwing off all authority ever since. Yet we Americans want to be our own authority with as little limitation as possible. In fact the person who can question authority is more respected than the one who submits to authority without thinking. But the bottom line is that according to our Creator Jesus, we are under His authority. With His authority, at the previous passage, He cleansed the temple in Jerusalem. As a result, the religious leaders were really mad and they were determined to kill Jesus. Today’s passage is about how Jesus was confronted by them in regard to His authority. As a matter of fact, if they took notice of what had happened to the leafy fig tree, they should have acknowledged who Jesus is. But they were spiritually blind. So today’s passage shows who Jesus is and what authority he has. May the Lord help us to accept our Lord Jesus and live under His perfect authority. Amen.

1. Read verse 27. What can we learn from Jesus who arrived again in Jerusalem and was walking in the temple courts despite the religious leaders’ threat? (27, Luke 19:41, 47)

1-1, Read verse 27.

They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him.

1-2, What can we learn from Jesus who arrived again in Jerusalem and was walking in the temple courts despite the religious leaders’ threat? (27, Luke 19:41, 47)

***27 They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him.***

***41 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it*** *42 and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. 43 The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. 44 They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.” 45 When Jesus entered the temple courts, he began to drive out those who were selling. 46 “It is written,” he said to them, “‘My house will be a house of prayer’[*[*c*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke+19&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25778c)*]; but you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’[*[*d*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke+19&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25778d)*]”****47 Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him.***

* The atmosphere was so hostile that Jesus could have chosen not to go to Jerusalem. But Jesus was determined to obey His Father in Heaven to fulfill His redemptive work.
* One day Billy Graham said, “if you are prepared to die, you are prepared to live.” Jesus was eager to serve all the people including the religious leaders. His teaching was different from the teachers those days according to the people.
* According to Luke 19, Jesus wept. Jesus’ heart was broken because without repentance, Jesalem people will be greatly troubled in AD 70.
* Luke 19:41-47 is a vivid description of what would happen to them because of their rebellious and wicked condition. He also taught them every day in the temple so that they would be enlightened to know who Jesus is and what God’s will is.
* May the Lord help us to learn of Jesus’ shepherd heart. We may serve our Bible students to the end with never give-up love like Him.
* Jesus also restored the original purpose of the temple courts to teach the people again and again so that they may have eternal life through knowing Jesus Christ.

***the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him.***

* They were known as the Sanhedrin, a group of 72 men which consisted of three subgroups called the chief priests, teachers of the law, and elders.
* They handled the political, religious, and judicial functions of their nation. They were kind of like the Jewish executive, legislative, and judicial branches.
* The chief priests included the current ruling high priest Caiaphas as well as the former ruling high priest Annas who happened to be his father in law.
* Then there were the teachers of the law who were the Sadducees and Pharisees who were often at odds with one another but joined forces to get rid of Jesus.
* And lastly there were the elders; a group of older men who were representatives of the major tribes and families of Israel who were lay leaders that had high authority over the nation.

Mark 8:31 reads,

*He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by* ***the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law,*** *and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.*

* So far, outside of Jerusalem, the religious leaders didn’t really mean business to kill Jesus. But Jerusalem was their home and no one messed with them.
* Since clearing the temple, the religious leader’s hatred of Jesus became out of control because he disrupted their business during the busiest time of the year.

1. Read verses 28-30. What did the religious leaders ask Jesus? (28) What might have made them concerned about authority? What was Jesus’ reply? (29-30)

2-1, Read verses 28-30.

“By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you authority to do this?”

29 Jesus replied, “I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. 30 John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!”

2-2, What did the religious leaders ask Jesus? (28)

***28 “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you authority to do this?”***

* They should have respected Jesus and His authority like others in Mark 1:22 and 27. But they were proud and very hostile with a murderous intention to kill Jesus.
* It appears that the purpose of the question imposed to Jesus was that the authorities were hoping to trap him.
* If he claimed that his authority came directly from God they might be able to accuse him of [blasphemy](https://www.learnreligions.com/religious-authority-vs-secular-authority-250739).
* If he claimed that the authority came from himself, they might be able to report him as an enemy of the existing power such as Roman governor under Rome.
* They were trying to trap Jesus so that they wanted to remove him and wanted to maintain their influence to rule the Jewish society.

2-3, What might have made them concerned about authority?

* ‘And who gave you authority to do this?’” They were saying, “Where is your license?” First of all to their eyes, Jesus’ clearing the temple was illegal.
* He was not given authority to ruin the temple revenue. Also, his teaching the Bible to the people was illegal because he did not have a license to teach the Bible.
* The authority is a strange thing. If it is used properly, it brings salvation and glory to God. If it is abused, it brings pain and sorrow to many people.
* Americans valued self esteem, self development, self expression, and freedom of choice. So if authorities and rules do not fit easily into their lives, they protest.
* If it feels good, just do it. Live and let live. Rules are made to be broken. There is an exception to every rule. The exception proves the rule. The voice of the people is the voice of God. Power ultimately corrupts. A quotation from an authoritative book can not always be trusted.
* The more people have authority, the more they abuse it. But one thing is clear that Jesus is not a corrupted human being. So He is different.
* Jesus used his authority to serve people and save their lives and lead them to the kingdom of God by teaching them the word of God.
* In contrast sinful human beings are selfishly using authority for their own interests and benefits. For example in this disastrous pandemic, many human leaders are abusing their administrative power to control their subject people.
* How did the religious leaders use their authority? Three religious groups were united to murder Jesus, the Son of God, our Savior and Lord.
* Jesus’ crucifixion on the cross was drawing nearer and nearer. In spite of his impending death, Jesus was teaching the Bible to the crowds selflessly.
* He put his sheep’s need above his own need. He didn’t think much about himself. He was ready to give his life for God’s flocks.
* But the religious leaders are the utilitarians who wanted to sacrifice a few people including Jesus Christ for the sake of greater numbers. They were politicians in the true sense. They were ignorant of God’s will and God’s perfect love.
* But Jesus served them to the end with the word of life. Jesus did not fall into their political trap. Jesus did not answer their question and instead gave them a counter question.

2-4, What was Jesus’ reply? (29-30)

***29 Jesus replied, “I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. 30 John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!”***

* John the baptist was known as the great prophet who preached the message of repentance to all people. He was respected.
* Jesus helped them to discern what authority Jesus has had and John the baptist had had. Praise Jesus and His never-ending shepherd heart to serve them.

1. Read verses 31-33. What were the religious leaders’ discussing? (31-32) What does this show about them? What was their answer to Jesus? (33) What can we learn from the passage?

3-1, Read verses 31-33.

They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ 32 But if we say, ‘Of human origin’ …” (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.)

33 So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.”

Jesus said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”

3-2, What were the religious leaders’ discussing? (31-32)

***They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ 32 But if we say, ‘Of human origin’ …” (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.)***

3-3, What does this show about them?

* So the religious leaders answered, “We don’t know.” They were liars. They knew what was the answer. But they did not answer intentionally. They were nothing but a den of robbers. Their consciences were dead.

3-4, What was their answer to Jesus? (33)

***33 So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.”***

***Jesus said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”***

* Jesus said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things” The religious leaders did not repent though Jesus challenged them to repent by clearing the temple.
* They chose to remain in their own darkness and do evil. But Jesus did not abandon them and gave them another chance to repent by giving them the parable of the tenants in the following passage. What a shepherd He is!

3-5, What can we learn from the passage?

* Jesus’ authority is based on His self sacrifice and absolute trust and obedience to His Father in Heaven. His authority is different from any human being.
* This passage reminds me of Peter and John who got a similar question in the temple after a beggar is healed in Acts 4:7, “By what power or by what name did you do this?”
* The same authority was given to those who followed Jesus and His sacrificial life giving life. Matthew 28:18-20 reads, *“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All* ***authority*** *in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*
* May the Lord help us to live a life of authority in and through Jesus and His life giving words and mission oriented life to bear much fruit for God’s glory Amen.

**Conclusion**

The religious leaders wanted to deny the authority of Jesus because they did not want to live under His authority. And that was the root of their unbelief. They didn’t want to humble themselves before Jesus and submit to His authority. They did not want to sacrifice their position, possession and so on. But we can not deny this fact that those who accept Jesus must live under His authority. There is no other way nor alternative!

**One word: By What Authority?**