**By What Authority**

Luke 20:1-8

Key Verse 2

“Tell us by what authority you are doing these things,” they said. “Who gave you this authority?”

**Introduction**

When Jesus came into Jerusalem and threw the traders out of the temple, he was acting like someone who thought he was in charge. But there was already a structure of authority set up in the temple with guards at the bottom and the chief priests at the top. The High Priest was the most senior figure. Who did Jesus think he was to come in, without any accreditation, and start throwing his weight about? This is the natural question to ask. However the religious rulers were blind to see who Jesus truly was. They had their own fixed ideas and they didn’t want to yield their established power in the temple. In such a way they became the devil’s instruments. So where there is a work of God, there is a work of Satan, for our enemies take advantage of those who stubbornly reject Jesus’ authority. Today’s passage shows their question and Jesus’ answer. May the Lord help us to accept Jesus’ word so that we may see His absolute authority in our daily lives.

1. Read verses 1-2. What can we learn from Jesus who kept teaching the people although he knew that he would be crucified in just a few days? (1) Why did the religious leaders ask Jesus about His authority? (2, 19:45-46)

1-1, Read verses 1-2.

One day as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple courts and proclaiming the good news, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, together with the elders, came up to him. **2** “Tell us by what authority you are doing these things,” they said. “Who gave you this authority?”

1-2, What can we learn from Jesus who kept teaching the people although he knew that he would be crucified in just a few days? (1)

***One day as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple courts and proclaiming the good news, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, together with the elders, came up to him.***

* Since driving out the merchants from the temple area, Jesus had spent everyday preaching and teaching at the temple.
* His teaching was so powerful and heart-moving that according to Luke, all the people were hanging on his words.

Luke 19:47-48 reads,

“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. 48 Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words.”

* When we **hang on** someone’s words we totally forget everything else and focus solely on what the speaker is saying.
* This may be the secret for anyone to know who Jesus truly is and accept Him.
* Even though he knew he was about to be crucified by some of the same people he was teaching, Jesus kept preaching and teaching the word of God until his final day. From beginning to end, Jesus faithfully taught the people.
* No matter how miserable the people were, Jesus first planted the word of God.
* Jesus never lost patience or hope for people because he had great concern for them. He really wanted them to know their father’s perfect love.

1-3, Why did the religious leaders ask Jesus about His authority? (2, 19:45-46)

***2 “Tell us by what authority you are doing these things,” they said. “Who gave you this authority?”***

***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’; but you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’***

* Whenever the work of God happens, Satan will try and come to undo it.
* The chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders were flocking to attack Jesus. They were all established rulers in terms of religious sect.
* They tried to denounce the divine authority of Jesus. They cross-examined Jesus so that they might charge Him with blasphemy and catch Him preaching illegally without a license.

*"Tell us by what authority you are doing these things. Who gave you this authority?"*

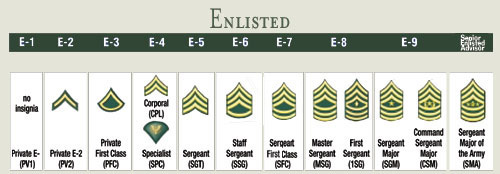
* They might have still angered by Jesus’ act of cleansing the temple and might have come with a heart to revenge him.
* As chief priests they were in charge of the temple but had seriously abused this privilege.
* The temple was supposed to be devoted to preaching and prayer. However, it had become a marketplace where many were being cheated.

Matthew 23:1-3 and 13 reads,

“Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: **2** “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. **3** So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.”

* God wanted to use them as a source of blessing but they had become a burden.
* The question they posed “Who gave you this authority?” was not a question seeking a legitimate answer but rather a question meant to undermine Jesus.
* Someone may ask us “Who gave you a certificate to teach the Bible?”
* Jesus didn’t pursue debates with these religious leaders.
* He wanted to teach the people and tell them about God’s good news. Yet the questioners came to Him, and He answered them with great wisdom and power.
* Let us think about “authority” in brief.
* In fact in the army, the higher in the ranks you go, the less you give orders with loud voice.

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* The commanding officer may simply write down his instructions, or speak them in a quiet voice to his next in command, while a private 2 may shout at the top of his lungs to convey his command to a private.
* Authority is therefore passing, quietly and without many people even noticing, from the old system to the new.
* Luke, writing with half an eye at least on the Roman Empire, pointed out from the beginning of the book that Jesus is the Lord of the world.
* Jesus is the maker and the creator in the beginning. (Jn 1: 3)
* Caesar Augustus was making the loudest noise, issuing his commands with no idea that Jesus is the ultimate Ruler.
* Jesus is the Lord of the temple. The high priest was making the loudest noise in Jerusalem without knowing who Jesus is. He might think that he had ability to have access to the Roman governor to execute Jesus.
* But now his power is challenged by one who speaks more quietly, one who comes with prophetic and royal authority challenging the old regimes.
* Soon Jesus would be crucified on the cross and exercise His authority over sin and death. His authority is to save and heal the lost until all acknowledge it.
* In our days, we should acknowledge Jesus as Sovereign Lord over our lives, our thoughts and actions, and seek to live under His authority. We should do this even when it comes(as it often does) in whispers and in revelation through personal meditation of the written, but living words of God, or through one to one Bible study rather than by loud music or a sermon.

Luke 24:25-27 reads,

“He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.”

* If Jesus is Master or Lord of the whole world and reminds us of this on and off through some tribulation like earthquakes, wars, and so on, we have the task of making Jesus’ lordship known in our times.



* "Pacific Ring of Fire" is a popular geographic term referring to an area or path on the globe where there are frequent earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.
* Lately Christian leaders from different Ring of Fire nations started to unite, forming an alliance called Ring of Fire, longing to see a spiritual earthquake come near in the future.
* They see through a unique spiritual explosion that will spread throughout the Pacific.

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.”

2. Read verses 3-6. How did Jesus reply to their question? (3-4) Why might Jesus have mentioned John’s baptism? (Jn 1:26-35) Why did they have difficulty in answering Jesus’ question? (5-6)

2-1, Read verses 3-6.

**3** He replied, “I will also ask you a question. Tell me: **4** John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin?” **5** They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Why didn’t you believe him?’ **6** But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ all the people will stone us, because they are persuaded that John was a prophet.”

2-2, How did Jesus reply to their question? (3-4)

***3 He replied, “I will also ask you a question. Tell me: 4 John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin?”***

* Jesus had wisdom and patience to deal with their challenging questions and continued to teach them out of his love and hope for them.
* Jesus had clearly showed his authority by his miracles and teachings but they didn’t want to accept it because of their proud heart.
* Jesus responded to their question with yet another question. It was a common method of his when dealing with the Pharisees and others that came to him asking questions out of wrong motives.

2-3, Why might Jesus have mentioned John’s baptism? (Jn 1:26-35)

“I baptize with water,” John replied, “but among you stands one you do not know. **27** He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.” **28** This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing. **29** The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! **30** This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ **31** I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.” **32** Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. **33** And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ **34** I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.” **35** The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. **36** When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!”

* The reason Jesus asks the question is because the authority he has over the temple is precisely his royal, messianic authority. His royal status and authority were conferred on him publicly at the time of John’s baptism when the Holy Spirit descended on him like a dove and God’s voice came down from Heaven.
* If John the baptist was a true prophet, then Jesus is indeed the true Messiah.
* Jesus then has authority over the temple. At the early stage of this book, the author Luke already explained what happened to endorse Jesus fully as the Son of God.

2-4, Why did they have difficulty in answering Jesus’ question? (5-6)

***They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Why didn’t you believe him?’ 6 But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ all the people will stone us, because they are persuaded that John was a prophet.”***

* When they heard Jesus’ question they knew they were in deep trouble. Jesus’ question to them wasn’t deep, it was a question that everyone could answer.
* They made it difficult because they weren’t honest. They wanted to say it was from men because they didn’t want to acknowledge John’s witness about Jesus (that he was the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world). They also couldn’t because they were afraid of the people who all believed that John’s baptism was from God.
* They didn’t want to say it was from God because then they’d have to accept Jesus’ authority.

3. Read verses 7-8. What does their final answer show about their attitude toward truth? (7) Why was Jesus unwilling to give them a direct answer? (8) What can we learn from this passage?

3-1, Read verses 7-8.

**7** So they answered, “We don’t know where it was from.” **8** Jesus said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”

3-2, What does their final answer show about their attitude toward truth? (7)

***7 So they answered, “We don’t know where it was from.”***

* So they ended up pleading their ignorance saying “We don’t know where it was from.”

3-3, Why was Jesus unwilling to give them a direct answer? (8)

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

* When they didn’t have the right attitude, Jesus didn’t answer them directly. In short, they didn’t care what the truth was.
* They only cared about what seemed best to them, to maintain their position of authority over the temple.
* It was not hard for them to know Jesus, for Jesus already elaborated who He was and what He would do. But their hearts were hard like stones.

Luke 4:16-21 reads,

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, **17** and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: **18** “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, **19** to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” **20** Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. **21** He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

3-4, What can we learn from this passage?

* We often are quick to look down on the experts of the law and the Pharisees because it seems Jesus criticizes them in every passage.
* However, he does this in order to warn us because he knows how easy it is for us to become like one of them.
* Like them, we have a tendency to look toward our self interests. Without a proper relationship with God, all of our actions will be influenced by what we think would benefit us.
* As we will see in the parable, when man looks out for his best interest and ignores God, he becomes dishonest and turns to evil.
* We must come to Jesus with an honest and pure heart then he will bless us to receive more than we can imagine.
* I pray we may hang onto the words of Jesus and let go of our own ideas and interests.
* This passage also reminds us of a good example of a centurion in Matthew 8.

When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. **6** “Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.” **7** Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him?” **8** The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. **9** For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” **10 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.** **11** I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.**12** But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” **13** Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that moment.

**Conclusion**

The religious leaders tried to stop the work of God with their established power, but they failed. Probably they had never thought that they were rebelling or hindering the work of God. They might think that they were servants of God because they were wearing the robes of priests. But in reality, they were instruments of the devil. Still Jesus helped them to repent and accept God’s words humbly. According to God’s promise, Jesus came and fulfilled the work of the Messiah. He preached the good news to the poor. He proclaimed freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind. He released the oppressed and proclaimed God’s grace of sin forgiveness. He preached the kingdom of God to those who had no hope in the world. May the Lord help us to stand firm and continue to do God’s work by faith and with humility. Amen.

**One word: By Jesus’ authority!**