

Part 79

• *Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem for the last time*

Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem for the last time. The common people of Jerusalem have received Him warmly believing that Jesus is a political Messiah who will deliver them from the oppression of the Romans and raise Israel to eminence among the nations. The religious leaders hate Him.

• *Opposed by the religious leaders*

Jesus has only a few days to live. He arrived in Jerusalem on a Sunday; He will be crucified on the Friday. The religious leaders are doing their utmost to get Jesus into trouble with the people. As Jesus is teaching in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes and the elders come to do what they can to oppose Him¹.

¹ 20:1

• *They question His authority*

Their first question is a question of authority. Jesus had ejected the salespeople from the temple. They had turned a prayer-centre into a kind of religious market. They were making business out of the centre of Israel's system of worship. Now He is teaching the people. So the leaders of Israel ask the question: 'By what authority are you doing these things?'¹.

¹ 20:2

1. We can see here two kinds of authority

1. We can see here two kinds of authority. The chief priests, the scribes and elders have official authority, but they have no spiritual authority. They do not have the power of the Holy Spirit, but they do have a position of power within the religious organisation of the temple in Jerusalem. On the other hand, Jesus has spiritual authority but He does not have any political power. The Holy Spirit has anointed Him to preach. The power that came upon Jesus at the time of His baptism is still with Him. The people of Jerusalem can feel it as Jesus teaches and preaches. He teaches 'as one who has authority and not as their scribes'¹. The very scribes who are interrogating Jesus have a certain amount of official power but they know nothing of the power of the Holy Spirit.

¹ Matthew 7:29

• *The scribes have official power but no spiritual authority*

2. The religious leaders have no interest in spiritual authority

2. The religious leaders have no interest in spiritual authority. They are asking a question about authority but they actually have no real interest in the subject. If Jesus began to talk to them about the authority of the Holy Spirit, they would only use what He said against Him. Their reason for asking the question is not because they want to know the answer but because they hope Jesus will say something that will get Him into trouble. If He says, 'I have authority because I am God's Messiah', they will be able to claim that Jesus is a threat to the Roman government. So they hope that Jesus will give an answer that they can use to get rid of Him.

• *Their question is aimed at getting Jesus into trouble not out of real interest*

Their insincerity is soon revealed when Jesus answers their question by asking them a question. 'Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?'¹. It is a good question to ask. Jesus' authority was the same kind of authority that John had. It was authority from God, authority that came upon John because he was full of the Holy Spirit.

¹ 20:4

• *Their insincerity soon revealed by Jesus*

They refuse to answer the question. They do not really believe in the kind of authority that John had, but they are afraid to say so because the ordinary people of Jerusalem recognised him as a man of spiritual power.

• *The leaders refuse to answer*

They are afraid of the people, and in that they reveal that they have no spiritual authority. A man endued with the power of the Holy Spirit does not live in fear of what people think of him. He leads the people; he does not fear the people. The religious leaders of Jerusalem reveal that they have no real authority at all. They may have important positions in the religious hierarchy of Jerusalem but they have no power to influence or bless the people.

• *Jesus refuses to answer*

So they lie. They ‘answered that they did not know where John’s authority came from’^{□1}. Jesus brings the conversation to a close: ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things’^{□2}. Jesus is not obliged to answer them. They have themselves claimed that it is possible to say, ‘We don’t know’. Why should Jesus answer a question about Himself that they cannot answer about John? We are not obliged to give answers to interrogators.

□1 20:7
□2 20:8

3. True authority comes from God

• *By the power of the Holy Spirit*

3. True authority comes from God. The reader of Luke’s Gospel knows where Jesus gets His authority from. At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry the Holy Spirit came upon Him and has remained with Him ever since. His understanding, His miracles, His preaching, His great wisdom in answering questions – they all come from the power of the Holy Spirit which rests upon Him.

• *From the Father*

He has the authority of being sent by the Father to do His work. He was sent to seek and to save the lost. There is no greater authority than being in the will of God and responding to the call of God.

• *The leaders have managed to get themselves into important positions but without God’s commissioning or power*

The question that might be asked of these religious leaders is: what is **their** authority? They have managed to get themselves into important positions in the leadership of Israel but what real authority do they have in the things of God. Has God commissioned them? Have they become aware of the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives? What authority do they have? They are able to lord it over others because they have managed to get themselves into some kind of official position within the leadership in Jerusalem. What kind of authority does Jesus have? The same as John: the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon someone sent by God to do His will.



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