

Ch. 20:1 And it came about on one of the days while He was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, that the chief priests and the scribes with the elders confronted Him, 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?" 3 And He answered and said to them, "I shall also ask you a question, and you tell Me: 4 "Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?" 5 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why did you not believe him?' 6 "But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet." 7 And they answered that they did not know where it came from. 8 And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

We find ourselves in the final week of Jesus life here. Scholar's disagree trying to take all of the different fragments from 4 gospel writers and re-assemble a timeline.

Ultimately it doesn't have any spiritual significance which day this is. I'm going with Wednesday. He comes up the hill from Jericho on Sunday, the Jewish first day of the week. He has His final formal triumphal entry on Monday. He cleanses the temple on Tuesday. This is Wednesday, a full day of teaching, and somewhere in that timeline these events that Luke chooses to relay to us take place.

The conflict is with the rulers of Israel, not the Romans who are the ultimate occupiers, but the Jews who Rome is allowing to rule their nation with a great deal of autonomy, the Jews have a conflict with Jesus that has been ongoing and building to a crescendo for 3 years.

Jesus is a direct threat to the authority of the Jewish leaders. He shows up. He ignores them. He ignores their religious system. He ignores all of their hierarchy. He just doesn't acknowledge them as anything or anybody of any significance or importance.

Except when he speaks out directly against them from time to time. Do what

they tell you if it's aligned with God's book. But don't do what they do. They are hypocrites. He either ignores them or he's telling the people they are hypocrites.

And the people are sort of transfixed because of all the miracles. He raises people from the dead, but we're not supposed to listen to Him?? You guys are right and He's wrong and we're not supposed to listen to His words. But He's the one who does the miracles. That's kind of a tough sell. The people are slipping out of the grasp of the rulers.

Their religion and their power base over the people as a governing authority are all mixed up together. The power people are at the top of the religion. Here's a tiny view of how the hierarchy worked in that nation. Rome aside.

There is a high priest. There is a captain of the temple. And there is a ruling body of 70 elders called the Sanhedrin. Then below that level there are uber religious men, and all of this is sort of divided up into ideological groups not so different from our political divisions.

There are Saducees who are the least religious and most wealthy. The chief priest and his family business that Jesus cast out the day before are Saducees. They're like the religious liberals. They don't believe in . . . much. No life after death. No heaven. No hell. Everything is about right now. They will own the first 5 books of Moses, the pentateuch, but they don't do what it says.

Then the pharisee's are the conservatives. They believe in the literal interpretation of the Holy Books. They believe in life after death, in the resurrection to glory or agony dependent on how you lived here. They are legalists of the rankest order.

There are Herodians. They go along to get along with Rome jews. There are zealots who believe in using terrorism against Rome. Kill the Romans. And to some extent there are representatives of all of these ideas at the ruling level in Jerusalem. The Sanhedrin court would have had representatives from all these ideological groups.

The scribes are the lawyers. They are the keepers of the layers upon layers of traditions from the Rabbi's that are layered so deeply upon God's book that nobody remembers what the book really said, it's the traditions of the elders based upon the big name important historical Rabbi's that the scribes will quote and argue about daily.

This is a multi-layered multileveled culture based on the religion of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the 12 tribes, and the law of Moses. All buried somewhere under layers and layers of traditions of the elders the famous Rabbi's.

And Jesus walks in and ignores all of that. All of it. Except when he's calling them hypocrites and telling them they won't be in God's kingdom. At all. Jesus walks in and treats them and their religion like none of it means anything. All of it is of no value, it's like a vile garment to God. Appointed for destruction.

He rides into town on a colt, the foal of a donkey with people hailing Him as Messiah and King. He allows the adoration and worship. When the rulers tell Him to silence these folks He says if He did, the rocks would cry out.

Then the next day He comes and destroys their money machine. The sellers and money changers cast out of what? What was that He said. His Father's house?? My house. . . And the people are mesmerized. Like the pied piper or something. All of the importance of the top leading men in high places, the recognition and importance has shifted away from the rulers and onto Jesus.

Let me paint a picture that is just slightly more current that you can envision in your minds eye of the scene before us.

Picture if you will, the Pope has his rug thrown out the window and is addressing the people on Vatican square and a man shows up with a voice that can drown out the pope and starts teaching. No robes. No letters. No titles. No history. No nothing.

But he does miracles. He raises the dead. And right there on Vatican square he teaches that the pope and all the other slightly lesser ranking cardinals and bishops and whatever else, and all of the liturgy and all of the drama is all hypocritical baloney and religiously bankrupt before God. He teaches that God, who he claims is his Father doesn't recognize them or their religion.

You can picture something like that on the tiles of Vatican square and everybody turns away from the pope and listens to the other guy. The guy who does miracles. That's a problem, if you're the vatican. And it's a problem for these rulers of Israel in Jerusalem.

No permission asked or required to cleanse the temple. He just shows up and starts ripping and tearing. He has All authority. Given to Him by God. He never once asked permission for anything He did. Never once acknowledged the religion that was present. Attacked them at every possible level. Physically and spiritually. Taught with no ordination no letters no precedent. Taught their book with authority as no one else did.

Jesus is in full attack mode. He attacks their religion at every level. Physically and spiritually. He attacks their theology. He attacks their credibility. He attacks their system physically. Drives out the sellers. He teaches with no precedent. No school of rabbinical thought. No previous precedent. No hierarchy. No letters. Nothing.

There was no one like Him before, or after Him. He weilds authority from an unknown place. An unknown source. He rides in one day and upsets . . . everything. Everything. And the people are mesmerized. What do you do?

Well, we already had that verse. They are hard at work devising some way to destroy Him. He must be . . . cut off. Death is the solution and it can't happen fast enough for these men.

Their plan is this. We'll send a delegation to ask Him about the authority behind what He's doing. He'll start up with this My Father is God business

that we've all heard Him say in the past, and we're going to take him captive as a blasphemer and we're going to stir up the people that He's a blasphemer and we'll kill Him.

That's the plan. That's what's behind the question they will ask Him. They're like foaming at the mouth with hatred, but they send the most dignified and respectable delegation of cool, calm, collected men to ask Him a question.

vs. 1 And it came about on one of the days while He was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, that the chief priests and the scribes with the elders confronted Him, 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?"

Jesus is teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel. That's pretty much what He has done from day one. His message is the gospel. The good news. The authority to reign of God, as opposed to Satan, on this planet, has come. Is available. God invites people to come out of the rule of this planet and come under the rule of God. That possibility is here. That possibility was throughout their history based on Messiah coming and forgiving sin, looking forward by faith to Messiah forgiving sin, and Messiah is here. Forgiveness is available.

Jesus teaches in the familiar historic rabbinical tradition. It's an interactive teaching as He moves from place to place, from portico to portico, as questions arise, as people interact. He teaches and offers forgiveness. He teaches with the authority of the one who wrote the book in the first place. He has power to forgive sin.

It's interesting that Luke delineates here between teaching and preaching. Didasko. Teaching. It is the imparting of information for the purpose of your hearers learning what they do not yet know. Didasko.

euaggelizó yoo-ang-ghel-id'-zo Preaching. Do you hear our word evangelize in there. This is to proclaim, to herald, to announce for the benefit of the

hearers, some news. Good news. It is a proclamation. An announcement. Good news! Good news!

Those are the two occupations of Jesus on this day. Announcing the good news of the authority to reign of God, the forgiveness of God, the coming out of the old sinful kingdom and into God's kingdom that is available. Good news.

And with such an announcement comes much teaching. Questions will be asked and answered with clear teaching of the Word of God on every subject they want to discuss. Preaching and teaching. In the temple.

Then suddenly the happy crowd is hushed as the important Rabbi's and rulers, the priests and scribes and elders, all dressed up in their different robes and hats that indicate their level of sophistication and rule in Israel. The heavies walk in. The rock stars enter the room. And they surround Jesus, and they have a question for Him.

Luke says; *that the chief priests and the scribes with the elders confronted Him,*

Three groups of experts. Religious heads. Lawyers. Rulers of the people. 3 groups of different authority that don't always get along with each other, made up of men with different ideologies, conservatives, liberals, radicals, Rome lovers, a little of everybody, all combined with one great similar intent. They have a common enemy that has bound them all together in spite of their differences for this single focus, single cause. Get Jesus. So they confront Him

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?"

Our world is built around the idea of authority and submission. There are those who have authority over us and those who we must submit to. And there are those who are under our authority, and who must submit to us.

For some of us, it's just the dog at this point. That's how our world works. With Covid and all of the new rules and voices calling for our submission we had to step back and study this question of authority and submission again to make sure we had necessary clarity. It was good to be forced to re-think about these principles again that we'd just sort of taken for granted.

Who do we really have to submit to? When do we fail to submit, and why? God has ordained three areas where authority and submission live and it all works as long as one area doesn't overstep its zone into another area. God has given Family, Government, and Church as realms of authority that we find ourselves living in this idea of authority and submission.

Crossover from one group, from one lane to the others usually ends in disaster for everybody. I don't need the government telling me what I can and can't do as head of my family. In some situations the government may have to intervene for the safety of some family members. That should be uncommon. God has designed families as units for comfort and safety and wellness and industry. Individual care, one for another is God's design for family members within a family unit.

There is authority and submission within families. Children submit to both parents. God says so in His book. Wives submit to husbands. God made it patriarchal, which our current culture loathes. Their hatred is against God who designed it. Sin corrupts it. No argument there. But families that run along God ordained paths that have a patriarch who honors God are places of blessing and thriving for all.

Then God has given government to control the impulses of evil men to sin. We require governments to protect us. That's the main job of government is to provide protection and security for its citizens. One family attacks another family, the government steps in to stabilize and protect and to punish the evil parties and reward the good.

The church is where families interact together to worship God. Moral law and

in the case of Israel, civil law and ceremonial law all came from the religious institutions. They have authority and submission over moral and spiritual matters.

The laws in Israel that define the authority and submission and how people interact with other people all came from the law of Moses. This is how families react with each other. This is how the civil governing rulers are to interact with each other. And this is how the household of God, the religion is to behave.

Recall, please because it's important to us now, how strict God was with crossover. The king is not to be the priest, and the priest is not the king. When king Uzziah in 2 Kings 15 acted as a priest God struck him with leprosy. The king is the king and the priest is the priest.

Not until Jesus does that separation combine. The king has no authority over the priests. The priests and the prophets of God are to be useful to the king about moral matters. The king should listen to the priests and prophets of God. But again they don't have ultimate authority over the king. God ordained separate lanes for family, for civil government, and for worship. Authority and submission. It's a big deal.

Heather married into a family where the father taught his children to reject all authority. Challenge all authority. I thought to myself; how exhausting. And his kids to this day have trouble working for anybody else. God designed authority and submission and it works when everyone stays in their lane.

Civil government closing down churches is a gross crossover of authority. But that isn't today's lesson. Just wanted you to have those thoughts close in your minds.

The question that the authorities ask Jesus at this point is all about authority. Just exactly who do you think you are Mr. Jesus. In Israel the lines were more blurred than ours between civil authorities and priestly authority. They had started as a Theocracy. But they wanted a king, like other nations, so God

who was their king allowed them to have a series of human kings.

Now, because of their dis-obedience, Rome was their king, like it or not. But the sanhedrin, the council of elders has religious and civil government authorities mixed up together. Different robes and hats defined who you were and what your powers were. The chief priest is at the head of that group. Rome is useless to them.

And these men have a LOT of authority. Rome was wise in how it governed it's vassel states. They allowed a lot of local autonomy. They allowed the different cultures to be themselves as long as nationalism didn't rear it's ugly head. When that happened, Rome would come and squash it.

So there was a mutual respect game going on here between Israel and Rome. We'll let you folks be Israel, business as usual, as long as you don't rise up nationalistically and challenge our ultimate authority, and then we'd have to crush you. That's actually what happened in 70AD.

So these men who come to visit Jesus have a lot of authority over the running of Israel both civil government and religious rule. And Jesus has none as far as they're concerned. Not only does He have no authority to do or say anything, He treats them as if they have zero authority. He treats them like they don't even matter. He ignores them unless He's actually attacking their hypocrisy.

It's almost as if an occupying force took over a country and set up it's rulers and lawyers and governments and schools and letters and all of that hierarchy of authority, and then one day the real King shows up, and ignores all of the occupiers claims to authority. He's the actual real King who belongs on the throne. He doesn't recognize any of the occupiers authority. And that's exactly WHO Jesus is.

So it's all of the heaviest heavies with all of the authority of Israel combined in a group that weilds all of the power of Israel without Rome versus one man who doesn't have any of the robes or vestments or hats or anything. It's the

rockstars against the nobody.

There must have been a hush of the multitude as this scarlet and white and purple mob moves through the crowd of thousands toward Jesus. Uh - oh! This ought to be interesting.

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?"

It's a calculated question designed to trap the person. We say this. He'll say God is His Father and God gave Him His authority. We'll charge Him with lunatic blasphemy. We'll escort Him off the temple grounds. We'll convince Rome He's a real threat. We'll make Him dead. Problem solved. Business as usual. Plan A. What could possibly go wrong?

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?"

3 And He answered and said to them, "I shall also ask you a question, and you tell Me:

This was the common rabbinical method of answering a question with a question. It's what good teachers do. A good teacher will have a mind that is sharp enough and be in such command of his subject that he can answer a question with a question that not only provides the answer but also adds depth and understanding that just answering the original question would have missed.

Of course, Jesus has the mind that could create deoxyribonucleic acid in microscopic cells that cause them to reproduce themselves perfectly. Jesus could design a snake with a brain the size of your little fingernail that can wrap its body around you and squeeze you until your life is over. A million million muscles all controlled by the tiniest brain imaginable.

Modern science has made our rejection of the creator a magnitudes greater sin

than it was in all previous history. That's the mind that goes to work to answer their question with a question. It was a gross mis-calculation of your opponent. But that's what we humans do. We stand and shake our tiny fist at God and tell Him what we're gonna do??!! Listen here buster! And God laughs . . . that's kind of what Jesus is doing here; Let me aks you a question first

4 *“Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?”*

Uh Oh. The whole nation had gone out to see John. To hear John. To participate in the baptism of repentance that would precede Messiah's arrival.

Israel had been devoid of a prophet for 400 long years. Radio silence from God after Malachi. 400 years of a desert of the word of God. And then an angel announces to Zechariah that he and his barren wife in their old age will have a son who will be the prophet who precedes messiah.

A miracle sign accompanies the announcement. Zecharias is struck dumb for dis-believing the message. When the boy is born, just as promised, a miraculous conception because of their age and Elizabeth's barrenness, Zecharias mouth is opened again. He speaks again.

John becomes the prophet that Malachi foretold and the angel announced. He dresses in camel skins and eats wild honey and locusts. There's nobody more like Elijah than John. Two peas in a pod. And he carries out the ministry that God assigned for him, perfectly, until Herod chops off his head.

But before that happened, one day Jesus walked up and John recognized his Messiah, and at the request of Jesus, Messiah, John baptizes Jesus in the Jordan river, and when he does, the skies open up and the Spirit descends on Jesus as a dove, and a voice out of the split open heavens declares "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The entire Trinitarian God is present in all three persons at Jesus baptism. Father Son and Spirit, at the baptism of John. Jesus says to these murderous

false religionists; 4 *“Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?”*

Was it a God incident, or was it just hocus pocus. I mean, even without the baptism with all 3 persons of the trinity involved, even if we're just asking about the phenomenon of John being the first prophet in 400 years. Was that real or is it just a bunch of people who got hyper about nothing.

John presented the Messiah to the people. John identified the Messiah and said *Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world.* Jn. 1:29

Answer that question and you'll have your answer about where my authority comes from. Mark tells us in his account of this incident that Jesus demanded an answer. Answer me! Our account in Luke says; Tell me. Not quite as forceful as Mark's version.

29“I will ask you one question,” Jesus replied, “and if you answer Me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. 30John’s baptism—was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me!” Mark 11:29,30

You really need to be a little smarter about who you pick a fight with. Me, I do my best not to pick a fight with anybody. To a fault. But shaking your little fist at God, you're going to outsmart Him. Not too bright.

5 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say, ‘Why did you not believe him?’ 6 “But if we say, ‘From men,’ all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet.”

Even when the baptism of John was a current happening, these men didn't respond to it. Back in Luke 7, Luke tells us; *29 And when all the people and the tax-gatherers 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.*

The people and the tax gatherers acknowledged what. Sin. They

acknowledged that they were sinners fully due the just penalty of death for their rebellious offense to a Holy God. God is just to judge sin. That baptism was an agreement with God's justice and our failure.

But these men who approach Jesus with their intent to murder Him just as quickly as they can put a false indictment together and seize Him, they didn't get baptized by John. Why? They don't believe God has any just reason to be in judgement against them. Their righteousness is derived from their false religious system of laws keeping. They don't need John. In fact they reject John the same as they reject Jesus.

And the ones who did go down to make a show of it for the people, John called them a brood of vipers. Who told you to flee from the wrath to come. They're in a tough spot. From Matthew 3:

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? 8 "Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance; 9 and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.

You think my preaching is rough sometimes. There's a little preaching from the man that Jesus said was the greatest man ever born of women. We have to assume that those who were asking the question of Jesus about His authority and where He got it from, were present that day at the Jordan, and after hearing John's condemnation they turned around and went back up the hill to Jerusalem. Rejecting John and his baptism. John's a lunatic and his Messiah is a bigger lunatic. They are the righteous spawn of God.

But they're in a pickle at the moment. Jesus question has them in a political power retaining pickle.

4 "Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?" 5 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why did

you not believe him?’ 6 “But if we say, ‘From men,’ all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet.”

Don't you hate those multiple choice questions where either choice sends you to jail. No good answer for these men. Because the multitude believes John was THAT prophet, the first in 400 years of silence, that announced the Messiah.

If these men say the whole deal at the Jordan was hocus pocus, they face an angry mob. But if they give the answer the mob wants to hear, the popular answer, it was from heaven, then Jesus will say, You have your answer. John gave the answer. Heaven opened and gave the answer. Why do you not believe the obvious.

Lose, lose. That's actually the formula anytime you go to war with God. Lose, lose.

7 And they answered that they did not know where it came from. 8 And Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

Those final words are judgment on Israel. These proud leaders have been in a death spiral for three years. When God reveals Himself and men disbelieve because they love their rank, they love their sin, they love their false religion that has elevated them in their pride to be someone important in this lost world of Satan, they reject truth in order to keep the lie, then God will blindfold the truth from them. *Neither will I tell you . . .*

That's a hopeless death spiral. You've actually worked hard to dismiss all of the revelation that did come. You're in no position to ask for new revelation. This is judgemental blindness. That's a frightening doctrine. Paul says;

7 What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; 8 just as it is written,

“GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR,

*EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT,
DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY.”* Romans 11:7,8

Unbelief spirals down into a hardened unbelief.

Beloved, our world is at war with God. And the heat is ramping up by the day. Isn't it encouraging to us, that God is not flustered by any of it. Psalms 2 says God is in His heaven laughing at the raging of evil men who would murder Him if they could. Waving their little fists at Him. Throwing dust in the air. Telling Him what they're going to do to Him.

All of them combined don't have the mental ability to take on the mind of Jesus. He will stop every mouth. Every knee will bow down before Him and give Him the honor and glory that He is due. Every knee. One way or the other. In this life or the next. In heaven and in hell. How marvelous is it that we have bowed our knee, here, today, in worship of His Glory. We wait for our King.

Life is for sowing. The harvest isn't here.

What a mystery life is, and love is a mystery within a mystery. ... to see more and more clearly that life is only a kind of sowing time, and the harvest is not here. Vincent Van Gogh 1883 in a letter to his brother Theo