

Challenged at the Temple

Mark 11: 27-33

Our text today continues to follow Jesus through what is commonly referred to as Passion Week. He had triumphantly entered Jerusalem and returned the next day to cleanse the temple. Again, for the third day in a row, Jesus had returned to Jerusalem and entered the temple.

One would expect this to be a place where Jesus felt at home – He was God robed in flesh, the Christ. The temple was set aside to worship the Lord. However, rather than being welcomed and recognized as the Christ, He was despised by the religious leadership. As Jesus entered the temple for the second time, the chief priests and elders were waiting for Him. They wanted to rid Jerusalem, and the world, from the one they considered a blasphemer and imposter.

While this passage focuses on the treatment of Jesus by those who should have loved and worshiped Him, we also find application for our lives as well. Those who are committed to serving the Lord might as well expect opposition. Often this will come from those we least expect, or from those we assume would seek to support our efforts. As we discuss the [aspects](#) of this encounter, I want to consider the thought: [Challenged at the Temple](#).

I. A Public Confrontation (27-28) – As Jesus made His way into the temple, He was publicly confronted. Notice:

A. The Hostility (27) – [And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders.](#) As Jesus walked into the temple, He was immediately confronted. We know according to the following chapter that He had come to teach the people. Jesus had come to expound upon the Word of God and was attacked by His adversaries as soon as He stepped into the temple. They did not wait for Him to share His message; they were determined to confront Him immediately. In fact, these men did not want Jesus in the temple teaching. They did not welcome His presence among them.

- If you are committed to the Lord and seeking to serve Him in any capacity, don't be surprised when the enemy attacks. He will even influence those you least expect to confront you or attack your motives. Often these attacks come without warning and happen at the most inopportune times. The devil likes to attack as we are preparing to engage in a ministry effort. These attacks can and do happen within the church. Satan often uses those who are part of the same congregation to launch his attacks on those he perceives as a threat. These attacks can come at any time. I have been confronted and chastised by someone angry just moments before I

was expected to take the platform and preach. The enemy has no pity or mercy. If you are serving the Lord, you might as well expect hostility at some point in your life.

B. The Conspiracy (27) – *And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders.* This was a concerted effort by many, that had no doubt been pre-planned. The temple leadership apparently had committed to confront Jesus the next He made His way into the temple. They had banded together and were all committed to preventing any further influence by Jesus. Likely these men would not have had the courage to confront the Lord individually, but they found courage in numbers. They wanted it to appear as if everyone agreed with their position.

- We have all heard the phrase – misery loves company. The church is no exception and is not immune to this mindset. Those who are disgruntled or angry typically seek others to join them in their efforts. They attempt to convince them their effort is actually a crusade for the benefit of the church. Like these temple leaders, they find strength and courage in numbers. When they find the opportunity to confront the one with whom they are upset, they usually will make a statement like this – “people” are talking, or I have had “several” mention this to me. Often the people are no more than “me, myself, and I,” but they think it adds credibility to their argument. The enemy will provide the means to “rally the troops” when he is determined to undermine a specific person or area of ministry.

C. The Inquiry (28) – *And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?* The temple leadership wasted no time in laying out their concerns and the issue they had with Jesus. Bear in mind these refused to embrace Jesus as the Christ. They were literally asking – who do you think you are? Who gave you the right to come in here and make any changes? By what authority are you doing these things? They refused to submit to the leadership and lordship of Christ.

- This issue has not changed and I doubt it ever will. This seems to be the tactic the enemy likes best. The overwhelming majority of issues within the church or any other organization boils down to who is in charge. Most issues are a struggle over authority. This is often detrimental, especially in the church. I will admit that leaders have been guilty of abusing their position and can take advantage of people. However, the Lord has established the leadership within the church, and as long as they are leading according to the Word, seeking to edify the Lord, the church should be willing to support the leadership. *Heb.13:7, 17 – Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.* ^[17] *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is*

unprofitable for you. Unfortunately, many churches and ministries face situations similar to what we find in the text. The will of man often supersedes the will and Word of God.

- Our world is also filled with those like the religious elite in that day. They demand to know who Jesus thinks He is? They refuse to submit to His authority, denying He is the sole means of salvation. They are more committed to the pleasure of the flesh than submitting to the Lordship of Christ and depending solely upon Him for salvation!

II. A Perplexing Conversation (29-33) – Here we discover the conversation that followed the confrontation of Jesus. Consider:

A. The Response (29-30) – *And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.* ^[30] *The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me.* Jesus quickly turned the tables on them. He refused to engage in futile debate with these men. They had no desire to learn of Him or receive Him as the Christ. Jesus knew the hardness of their hearts and the real motivation behind their actions. Rather than answering their question, He challenged them with another question first.

- Jesus knew these men had rejected John just as they rejected Him, but they were apprehensive about admitting it. John had come as the forerunner for Jesus, preparing the way for His ministry. He had preached a message of repentance and the coming of the kingdom. He had revealed that the time of Christ and the Gospel of salvation had come. If John had received authority to baptize from heaven, then clearly Jesus had received His authority from heaven as well. John came to point men to Christ. He had preached of the very one they now despised.
- Those who genuinely seek to serve the Lord and are opposed by others need to maintain a proper perspective. Whether the opposition realizes it or not, they are not actually challenging the authority through which we minister, but the authority of the Lord Himself. I know of no true servant of the Lord who operates under his own power or authority. Those who receive the Word receive Christ and those who reject the Word reject Christ.

B. The Reasoning (31-32) – *And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him?* ^[32] *But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed.* Jesus knew the condition of their hearts and the motivation behind their actions. These were not concerned with the ways of God or pleasing the Lord. They sought to maintain the control they had over the temple and those who came to worship. Jesus asked a question they could not answer in public. If they had answered the

question, they would have appeared in opposition to the Lord and His plan for humanity. If they admitted John was a prophet sent from the Lord they would have no excuse for their denial of his ministry. If they claimed he was not sent from God, they would have angered the people and lost much of their influence. When confronted by the Living Word, they were speechless.

- This reaction remains in our day as well. When people are confronted with the Word of God, they typically become very quiet. They know deep down they cannot argue with the Word; and when their ambitions do not line up with the Word, they refuse to acknowledge their error. Sadly, many choose to remain in open rebellion rather than submit to the authority of the Lord and His inspired Word.

C. The Rebuke (33) – *And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.* Knowing that answering the Lord's question would reveal the error of their ways, they refused to answer. Being determined not to engage in a conversation of no value, Jesus refused to answer their question. These men's hearts were hard and cold toward the Lord and there was no benefit in arguing with them. Had these genuinely sought the Lord, He would have responded and ministered unto them. He was not going to cast His pearls before swine.

- Sometimes the best answer when confronted is silence. It is not easy to walk away from a confrontation without defending our position, but at times this is the best response. You will eventually face those who have no desire for resolution. They merely want you to submit to their demands, regardless what the Word has said or how the Spirit has led. Engaging in a heated debate will never bring about the solution you desire. When it is impossible to reason with someone, walk away and pray for wisdom. Give the issue to God and allow Him time to work. Winning an argument does not always make one a victor. We must seek to serve the Lord to the best of our ability, according to His leading, and leave matters such as these in His hands.

Conclusion: Have you submitted to the authority of Christ in salvation? Are you submitting to His leadership in your life, desiring His will above your own? Are you struggling with a situation that you have been unable to resolve? The Lord has the answer for each of these situations. Bring your cares to Him, whatever the need, and trust Him to provide!