

32. Who do you think you are?

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When the people don't like what they hear or see from someone particular, they challenge that person with a phrase, "Who do you think you are?" It is intended to find out that person's authority over them. But in the background, they have the heart of rebellion and prideful attitude.

During the time Jesus walked on earth, many people asked this very question to Him. They were mostly religious leaders of that time. Jesus became a major threat to themselves, their social positions and their lifestyle. In return, they were challenging Him with snares and trapped questions that intend to hurt Him. Because they were not interested in finding the truth at all.

Two thousand years later, people still ask Him the same question: "Who do you think you are?" Jesus being the very God doesn't have to answer them, yet being a gracious God that He is, He answers them through His Word. But the people walk away from the Bible before they get an answer from Jesus.

A. QUESTIONING THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS

Matthew 21:23 Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?"

Upon His return from Bethany, Jesus taught in the temple. With the cleansing of the temple fresh in their minds, the chief priests and elders demanded to know by whose authority He overturned the tables and drove out the sheep and cows.

Matthew 21:24-27 But Jesus answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John--where was it from? From heaven or from men?" And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet." So they answered Jesus and said, "We do not know." And He said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

Jesus was not trying to avoid the issue. If the rulers received John's ministry, they would have received Jesus as their Messiah. Instead, the leaders permitted Herod to arrest John and then to kill him. If they would not accept the authority of John, they would not accept the authority of Jesus.

These chief priests were true politicians. They were more concerned about popularity than knowing truth. However, they were not popular with the Israeli people already. So, they really didn't want to put themselves into further hole by denying John the Baptist from heaven.

It is a basic principle of Christian living that we cannot learn new truth if we disobey what God has already told us.

John 7:17 If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.

Realizing they were backed into a corner, the chief priests and elders refused to answer. Next, we see Jesus will answer them, but indirectly. He was cleansing the temple by the authority of the Father, by the Son and by the Spirit.

Oswald Chambers said, "Doubt is not always a sign that a man is wrong. It may be a sign that he is thinking." There is a difference between doubt and unbelief. Doubt is a matter of the mind. Unbelief is a matter of the heart. Doubt is when we cannot understand what God is doing and why He is doing it. Unbelief is when we refuse to believe God's Word and do what He tells us to do. We must not confuse the two.

B. BY THE AUTHORITY OF GOD THE FATHER

Matthew 21:28-32 "But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.' He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said to Him, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.

First, Jesus cleansed the temple by the authority of the Father.

The vineyard, of course, speaks of the nation of Israel. Jesus put the prostitutes and tax collectors as the first son. They seemed unlikely candidates to receive John's message, but they did with repented hearts. On the other hand, like the second son, the pseudo-religious scribes and Pharisees gave only lip service to the preaching of John.

The leaders committed two sins: First, they would not believe John's message and second, they would not repent of their sins. Their unbroken spirits and pride dug their graves deeper.

Psalm 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart-- These, O God, You will not despise.

In light of this parable Jesus talked about, we must ask ourselves this very serious question: Which sons and daughters are we? Are we the ones who walk around with pseudo Christian looks on our faces and make others to think that we are spiritual, or are we the ones who say 'Yes' to God and follow Him with all of our hearts?

C. BY THE AUTHORITY OF GOD THE SON

Matthew 21:33-41 "Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?" They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men

miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons."

Second, Jesus cleansed the temple by the authority of the Son.

Taken from Isaiah 5:1-7, this parable speaks of Israel as a vineyard and of God as the owner who went to a far country. When the owner sent servants to collect, the vinedressers killed them just as the people of Israel had killed the prophets God had sent to them.

Did the Owner then say, "I'm going to send soldiers"? No, He said, "I'll send my Son."

Did He say, "I'll send lightning to strike them"? No, He said, "I'll send the Light of the world to show them of the eternal life in Him."

The response for that generous and ever-patient God the Father's gesture, they killed His Son.

God looked for fruit from Israel's leadership, but found little as shown in the fig tree incident in the last study.

I asked you all to underline a sentence of "They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons."" If you noticed, they sentenced themselves with their own punishment. When we don't follow to our God's will for our lives, we are sentencing ourselves like this chief priests and elders.

As God had provided everything the Israeli needed at the Promised Land, He gave this land to Americans who came over from the tyranny and oppressive rulers around the world. Our ancestors were thankful to the Lord and they found this nation under the authority of God Almighty. There is no other nation on the face of the earth that is blessed as much as America, because our founding fathers honored Him.

As the Israelites turned away from God, America is doing everything in her power to reject God from all the public areas. May I remind you that Sodom and Gomorrah were doomed by the burning sulphur and brimstones from heaven due to exceedingly wicked homosexuality? Greece and Rome also were perished because of dominating homosexuality in their societies. Do you think our country is heading for the same fate as those cities and countries? Yes and thousand times yes!

You might ask, "What is so big deal about homosexuality? They love each others." No, it is not love, but perversion. It is a direct defiance against God's creation. I don't care what Barbara Walters from 20/20 of ABC News talks about. I don't care what Rosie O'Donalds call it. I don't care Episcopal church approved a gay bishop. I don't care how I am politically incorrect. I just want to make sure that I am godly correct.

1Co 6:9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites

Like He dealt with Israel for many times, God will deal with this America severely.

Luke 12:48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

Matthew 21:42-46 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes'? "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder." Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet.

Jesus quoted Psalm 118:22-23 to explain that He was that Son and the Israel religious leaders were the vinedressers and vineyard's owner's servants were the prophets of God.

When the temple was under construction, stones were quarried miles away and transported to the temple mount. Forty feet wide and twenty feet high, these stones were massive. Yet they fit together perfectly that no mortar was needed, for not even a knife blade could fit between them. Tradition had it that one stone arrived on the scene but, because no one could figure out where it was supposed to go, the builders rolled it off a cliff into the Kidron Valley. Not until the foundation was complete did the builders discover they were one stone short. Sure enough, the stone they had rejected was none other than the cornerstone.

Often in the Old Testament, God is referred to as a rock or a stone in Deut. 32 and Ps. 18. The stone is also a messianic title. To Israel, Jesus was a "Stumbling Stone" according to Isa. 8:14-15, Rom. 9:32-33 and 1 Cor. 1:23. Israel rejected the Messiah, but in His death and resurrection He created the church. To the church, Jesus is the "Foundation Stone", the "Cornerstone" in Eph. 2:20-22 and 1 Peter 2:4-5. At the end of the age, Jesus will come as the "Smiting Stone" according to Dan. 2:34, destroy Gentile kingdoms, and establish His own glorious kingdom.

These religious leaders rejected Jesus because He interfered with the way they had chosen to live. He was a threat to their lifestyle and to their religious system. In spite of all their rhetoric and claims of interest in spiritual things, they were not really searching for the truth. Nor were they searching for the Messiah. Otherwise, they would have embraced Jesus.

You see, the Pharisees' rejection of Jesus Christ was but a reflection of every person who intentionally rejects Him. People do not reject Jesus Christ because they have examined the evidence and concluded He is not the Messiah. Most people that I talk to who say they are not Christians never have read the Bible. They haven't even read the Gospel of John from beginning to end. They never have carefully examined the claims of Christ. People don't reject Jesus Christ because of the hypocrisy of some inconsistent people. People reject Jesus Christ because He is a threat to their lifestyle. They don't want to change. They want things left as they are, because they hate the light and their deeds will be exposed.

D. APPLICATIONS

1) God will not give us any more instruction, unless we do what we are told.

Many people seek God's will in their lives. In most cases, they want God to tell them what is going to happen next hour and next day, so that they can change it the way they want. God wants us to do what is right according to His Word.

2) Realizing who God is always good for our spiritual, physical and emotional well being.

God is always right. When we argue with Him, it proves that we are wrong. It is very, very bad thing to challenge His authority.

3) It is better to fall upon the Rock and be broken in humble surrender before God than God comes down upon us and completely break us in judgement.

When the Holy Spirit corrects us with His gentle small voice, let's not resist Him. It is so much better to listen to Him than He crushes to break our hardened spirits. If it is necessary, He will do so, because He loves us too much to get away with hardened hearts.

Psalm 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart-- These, O God, You will not despise.