

# 31. The authority of God the Son

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Many of us have seen a bumper sticker on vehicles that states, "Challenge authority". Out of a human's rebellious heart, people want to challenge those who are over them in governmental position, positions in work places, in societies, in schools and even in homes. They love to challenge any authorities. Their motto is "Don't tell me what to do."

However, if the very people who would love to challenge the authorities over them are challenged by someone else, uh-oh, it is a completely different story. They say that they cannot have this kind of defiance and rebellion, because it would disturb the peace and harmony of others. But in truth, they don't like their authoritative positions being challenged and undermined by anyone.

We all remember what our parents' common answer was when they were asked, "Why?" so many times by us – "Because I say so." Have you ever noticed that you yourself answered your children's exact same questions in the same way your parents answered? "Because I say so."

The legal and spiritual authorities – priests, Pharisees and scribes – of the first century Israel didn't like what Jesus, the most popular rabbi from Galilee, the Miracle Worker who healed the lames, mutes, blinds, lepers and even raised the deads, did. He dared to challenge their authorities in Israel and called them spade to spade. He even called them, "Brood of vipers, white washed tombs, hypocrites, leavens, children of the devil" to name a few. Nobody, I mean nobody, dared to challenge them like this before except John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin.

So, right after Jesus demolished their money making set-up in the temple, they wanted to challenge the authority of Jesus Christ and even to embarrass Him in front of the public. They had no idea whom they were dealing with and they actually were glutton for punishment.

## A. CHALLENGING THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS

*Luke 20:1-8 Now it happened on one of those days, as He taught the people in the temple and preached the gospel, that the chief priests and the scribes, together with the elders, confronted Him 2 and spoke to Him, saying, "Tell us, by what authority are You doing these things? Or who is he who gave You this authority?" 3 But He answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one thing, and answer Me: 4 The baptism of John--was it from heaven or from men?" 5 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' 6 But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us, for they are persuaded that John was a prophet." 7 So they answered that they did not know where it was from. 8 And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."*

The chief priests claimed their authority from Moses, because the Law set the tribe of Levi apart to serve in the sanctuary. The scribes were students of the Law and claimed their authority from the rabbis whose interpretations they studied. The elders of Israel were the leaders of the families and clans, chosen usually for their experience and wisdom. They came to Jesus with both barrel loaded.

Their question was very much catch-22. If Jesus answered them that He did it in His own authority, they would laugh at Him. After all He was a mere rabbi to many, but they were the spiritual leaders of the nation. However, if He says His authority comes from the Lord, they could drag Him before the Romans as an insurrectionist, because the only lord the Roman government recognized was Caesar.

Wisely sidestepping these pseudo spiritual leaders' trap, Jesus used their own strategy against them. If they said John's authority came from heaven, they would be forced to accept Jesus as the Messiah, because that was who John proclaimed Him to be. So now the dilemma was on their shoulders. Can you imagine having Jesus in your high school debate team? Jesus is always in control.

There is another important aspect about Jesus' question we should notice. Since they denied the first truth about John the Baptist, why should Jesus give them another truth? It is the same for us. We often cry out to God that we want to know His will for us while we are not even obeying the first instruction the Lord tells us to do. Why should He give us the next one when we are not even doing the first ?

Jesus was not done with these phony spiritual leaders yet. Here is more.

## **B. THE PARABLE OF THE VINEDRESSERS**

*Luke 20:9-19 Then He began to tell the people this parable: "A certain man planted a vineyard, leased it to vinedressers, and went into a far country for a long time. 10 Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that they might give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the vinedressers beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 11 Again he sent another servant; and they beat him also, treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. 12 And again he sent a third; and they wounded him also and cast him out. 13 Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son. Probably they will respect him when they see him.' 14 But when the vinedressers saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.' 15 So they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do to them? 16 He will come and destroy those vinedressers and give the vineyard to others." And when they heard it they said, "Certainly not!" 17 Then He looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone'? 18 "Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder." 19 And the chief priests and the scribes that very hour sought to lay hands on Him, but they feared the people--for they knew He had spoken this parable against them.*

Like the last week's parable by Jesus, this parable also requires some typology terms for us to understand:

The vineyard represents the people of Israel. The owner is God, who has left His people in the hands of the vinedressers – the religious leaders. The mistreated servants sent to collect a share of the produce represent Israel's prophets. The owner's son, of course, is Jesus.

Just as greed for the inheritance drives the vinedressers to murder the son, lust for power will drive the Jewish leaders to kill Jesus. Their treachery would force God to destroy them and transferred His spiritual blessing to others, the Gentiles.

When the chief priests and scribes heard what the Lord Jesus told them in His parable, they answered, "Certainly not," in their defense. In other words, they wouldn't do such a thing. That was the exact move Jesus was expecting. Now He was going for a check mate with a Messianic Psalm, Psalm 118:22.

*Psalm 118:22 The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.*

This is the same Psalm the people quoted as Jesus was entering into Jerusalem a couple of days ago.

*Psalm 118:26a Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*

Remember these spiritual leaders' answer to Jesus? "Certainly not." In a few days, they were the ones who cried out to the Pilate, "Crucify Him."

But there was more to this series of questions than mere argument. The word translated "rejected" in v17 means "to reject after investigation." It was required that the Jews carefully examine the Passover lambs from the tenth day to the fourteenth day to make sure they had no blemishes. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, was watched and tested by His enemies during this final week. Yet in spite of what they saw and learned, they rejected Him.

One more thing in this parable, Jesus illustrated the insidious nature of sin. The more we sin, the worse it becomes. The tenants started off beating some of the servants and wounding others, but they ended up becoming murderers! The Jewish leaders permitted John the Baptist to be killed, they asked for Jesus to be crucified, and then they themselves stoned Stephen in the Book of Acts. These Jewish people sinned against God the Father who gave them the nation and the land and God the Son who came to show them the way to heaven and the Holy Spirit spoke through His witness Stephen.

### **C. CAESAR OR GOD?**

*Luke 20:20-26 So they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, that they might seize on His words, in order to deliver Him to the power and the authority of the governor. 21 Then they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, we know that You say and teach rightly, and You do not show personal favoritism, but teach the way of God in truth: 22 Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" 23 But He perceived their craftiness, and said to them, "Why do you test Me? 24 Show Me a denarius. Whose image and inscription does it have?" They answered and said, "Caesar's." 25 And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." 26 But they could not catch Him in His words in the presence of the people. And they marveled at His answer and kept silent.*

I feel like I am watching a dumb tag team of one of those fake professional wrestling matches. This time the Pharisees wanted to put Jesus against the Roman authority by asking Him a very complicated question about tax.

If Jesus said, "Don't pay the taxes," they would hogtie Him and hand Him over to the Romans as a lawbreaker. But if He agreed with paying taxes, the people around Him would not listen to Him anymore.

Instead of playing in their game, Jesus sent the ball back to their court again by asking them about the principle of the source of the government's authority.

No matter what the outcome of the upcoming election in November, the person who gets to go into the White House would be the one whom God chooses for this time. In our hope, we pray that the person is the one who follow the heart of God rather than some left wing commie pinko who agrees with public funded abortion and homosexuality.

I am sure all of you are paying taxes whether you like it or not. That is good. Because if you don't, you get to have your own prison ministry from the inside of a federal prison on South Wilmot Road in Tucson. But what about you giving God what is due to Him? Whether it is serving Him or tithing, do you do that? If you don't, you are thinking of God less than the federal government.

By now these spiritual leaders should have repented. But it was as if Jesus was firing into a beehive, they grew madder and madder with each hit.

#### **D. THE RESURRECTION – IS IT REAL?**

*Luke 20:27-40 Then some of the Sadducees, who deny that there is a resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, 28 saying: "Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife, and he dies without children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. 29 Now there were seven brothers. And the first took a wife, and died without children. 30 And the second took her as wife, and he died childless. 31 Then the third took her, and in like manner the seven also; and they left no children, and died. 32 Last of all the woman died also. 33 Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife does she become? For all seven had her as wife." 34 And Jesus answered and said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. 35 (1) But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, (2) and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; 36 (3) nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. 37 (4) But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' 38 For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him." 39 Then some of the scribes answered and said, "Teacher, You have spoken well." 40 But after that they dared not question Him anymore.*

Since Jesus knocked down the chief priests, scribes and the Pharisees with one-two truth, the Sadducees stepped into the ring to square with Him.

The Sadducees accepted as Scripture only the Five Books of Moses, and they did not believe in angels, spirits or the resurrection of the dead. That is why they were Sad-U-See. They claimed that Moses did not write about any of these doctrines. Wrong!

The priestly party in Israel was composed of Sadducees, which explains why the priests opposed the Apostles' preaching of the Resurrection and why they even wanted to kill Lazarus, who was raised from the dead. You can see why he liked the Bee Gees' song "Stayin' Alive".

If the brothers kept on dying like this when they were married to this woman, somebody should have checked the cappuccino she had been making for these brothers.

Rather than being tangled with this hypothetical question, Jesus went straight to the heart of four essential truths about the afterlife by quoting Moses whom they respected:

- 1) There is a difference between this age and the next.
- 2) There will be a resurrection.
- 3) There will be no death beyond this life.
- 4) The Scriptures provide the answers.

Moses himself considered that the Lord is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who were dead at the time. How could the Lord be their God unless their souls were alive? Besides, Moses used 'present' tense of 'is' rather than 'was'.

## **E. KING DAVID'S PROPHECY ABOUT THE MESSIAH**

*Luke 20:41-47 And He said to them, "How can they say that the Christ is the Son of David? 42 Now David himself said in the Book of Psalms: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, 43 Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" 44 "Therefore David calls Him 'Lord'; how is He then his Son?" 45 Then, in the hearing of all the people, He said to His disciples, 46 "Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, 47 who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation."*

According to Matthew 22:41-42, Jesus asked two final questions to the Pharisees while they were there.

*Matthew 22:42b "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?"*

This is the key question for every generation and each individual, because our salvation and eternal destiny are dependent on what we think about Christ.

Jesus quoted Psalm 110:1 which was known as a Messianic Psalm to everyone including the Jews. Jesus demanded them to answer how the descendant of David is the Lord – "Kurios" in Greek – to him. It is impossible unless the Messiah was both human who was born in the lineage of king David and divine, the Son of God.

This chapter is a great place to show to those Jewish people who don't know Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

## **F. APPLICATIONS**

- 1) Prepare yourself with the Word of God in your heart to defend what you believe in.

*1Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;*

- 2) When you are challenged about the authenticity of Christianity, present the Gospel of Jesus Christ and your personal testimony in simplicity with love.

It is not our job to save them, but it is certainly our job to present the truth to them. It is the Holy Spirit's job to convict them and bring them to repentance.

- 3) If they accept Christ into their hearts, help them and guide them. If they reject, be kind and courteous.