

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
Presbyterian Church

“HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO JESUS’ AUTHORITY?”

For individual study or group discussion

In a letter dated September 6, 1955, the novelist Flannery O’Connor wrote, “*The truth does not change according to our ability to stomach it.*” As we read Luke 20:1-8, we witness an encounter where the religious leaders are unable to stomach the truth about Jesus’ authority. The rejection of Christ’s authority by the chief priests, scribes, and elders is not for lack of evidence. At Jesus’ command, demons depart, diseases are cured, and the seas are calmed. No, their rejection of Christ’s authority reveals their hardened hearts.

How we respond to Jesus’ authority reveals the true condition of our hearts. (vv. 1-2)

By boldly entering the temple and driving out the corrupt merchants, Jesus is putting his authority on full display (Luke 19:45-48). These public actions outrage the religious leaders, and they demand to know by what authority Jesus does such things. According to J. C. Ryle, “*The spirit which prompted this demand is too evident to be mistaken. These men hated and envied Christ. They saw His influence increasing. They saw their own power waning. They resolved, if possible, to stop the progress of this new teacher; and the point on which they made their assault was His authority. They ought to have examined His mighty works. His teaching they ought, in all fairness, to have compared with their own Scriptures. But they refused to take either one course or the other. They preferred to call His authority into question.*”¹ Jesus claims absolute authority in all his teaching (cf. Matthew 7:29; 28:18), and as a result, the religious leaders hate him for it.

- Read Luke 7:18-23. How did Jesus answer a similar question posed by John the Baptist? Why do you think Jesus doesn’t give the same answer to these religious leaders? (cf. Matthew 11:25-27)
- The Jewish leaders had questioned Jesus’ authority before when he taught in the synagogue (Luke 4:22-28) and healed on the Sabbath (Mark 3:1-6; Luke 13:10-17; John 5:1-10). Read Luke 9:18-20. While people are wondering about Christ’s identity and authority, what is Peter’s response to Jesus’ question, “Who do you say that I am?”

The nature of Jesus’ authority depends upon its source. (vv. 3-8)

Instead of answering the pointed question given to him by the religious leaders, Jesus ends up turning the tables one more time with a question of his own: “Now tell me, was the baptism of John from heaven or from man?” (v. 3). If the leaders answer that John’s ministry is from God, they would be conceding John’s pronouncement, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29) to be true. Stuck between conviction and cowardice, they refuse to answer Jesus. Author and pastor Thabiti Anyabwile concludes, “*Beloved, this is a stunning scene. With one question the Lord Jesus Christ exposed the spiritual emptiness of Israel’s religious authorities. If you don’t know where authority comes from, then you can’t truly have it yourself. By that one question the Lord demonstrated that all of Israel’s religious authorities were unqualified to question his authority. If they couldn’t tell the difference between a prophet and a mere man, how could they judge the Son of God when he came?*”²

- Read Malachi 3:1 and 4:5. If John the Baptist is the messenger that would announce “the great and dreadful day of the Lord,” what does this tell us of the identity of Jesus? The religious leaders are meant to know every minute detail of the Law, but they can’t answer Jesus’ simple question. What does this tell us about the hearts of the religious leaders?
- Read Deuteronomy 18:15-19. God tells Moses that he “will raise up for them a prophet like you...and I will put my words in his mouth.” Who is the One who both satisfies the Law of Moses and transcends it? (cf. John 1:17 and Hebrews 3:1-6)

DATE: September 8, 2024

SPEAKER: David/Frank

SERIES: The Gospel of Luke

PASSAGE: Luke 20:1-8

RENEW: 31 Days of Prayer

DAY 2: Pray that we would be a church that engages people graciously.

PRAYER:

Father God, giver and sustainer of all life, you have redeemed us and called us to spread the life and light of Christ. And yet, sadly, far too often we spread death with our thoughts, our words, and our actions. Rather than viewing people as humans to be loved, we view people as obstacles or vehicles to our self-absorbed agendas. We breathe hate and discord from our lips and our keyboards. We are far too rich in gripes, grumbling, and grievances and far too poor in graciousness. Forgive us for all the ways our words and our ways with one another are shaped by sinful motives and selfish intent. Rescue us from sin and self, and remake us into a people who engages all people graciously. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice be put away from us. Let kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness mark us, both in the church and as we engage with our world. May all who come near us taste the compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience of our Savior. Empower us to bear with and love one another for the sake of your name and the good of all whom you place in our church and along our paths. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

**Church of the First Born,
strategic partner ministry**

PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

**David A., supported missionary
partner**

¹ Ryle, J.C. *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, Volume 3*. <https://gracegems.org/Ryle/l19.htm>. September 4, 2024

² Anyabwile, Thabiti. 2023, February 16. *Undeniable Authority of Jesus Christ - Trapping the Trappers*. Bible Outlines. <https://www.bibleoutlines.com/luke-20-1-8-undeniable-authority-of-jesus-christ-trapping-the-trappers/>