

Mark 11:27 – 12:12

Today, in Mark 11 & 12, we come to the first in a series of controversies between Jesus and the religious leaders in Jerusalem after He arrives for Passover week.

At the heart of the issue with the Jewish leaders was **fear**.

Last week we saw Jesus clearing the temple court & teaching. He overturned tables & chairs where money was being exchanged for profit and overpriced pigeons were being sold to the poor for sacrifices – I picture coins & pigeons & feathers flying all over the place. What a scene! Jesus singlehandedly brought the outer court to a stand-still and then He taught that it was supposed to be a place of prayer for all the nations.

And what was the reaction of the religious leaders? **Mk. 11:18**
[READ]

Remember when Lucy coaxes Charlie Brown over to her psychiatrist booth for some help and rattles off a bunch of phobias? but then she says, “or maybe you have **pantophobia**” – “do you think you have pantophobia?” “What’s that?”
“*the fear of everything*” “That’s it!”

Not really, but the Jewish religious leaders may have had some pantophobia when it came to Jesus....

Jesus threatened them on so many levels - their authority, their control, their income, their prestige, their religious system and their focus on Herod’s temple [which was a cash cow for them].

Jesus was a threat to everything they held dearand that people were astonished at Him was a huge **red flag**.

So instead of operating from a foundation of faith, they operated

out of fear laced with ego, jealousy, greed, control and a heavy
dose of staus quo religiosity.

Therefore, it's not a surprise that they came to challenge Jesus in Mark 11..... **Authority Challenged** [vv. 27-28][read]

This is the Power Team – members of the Jewish ruling council [the Sanhedrin] - Leaders of the Jewish Faith. And they come to challenge Jesus' authority by questioning His authority.

By what authority did you come riding into Jerusalem receiving people's praise? And by what authority did you proceed to trash the temple yesterday? And by what authority did you teach that the practices & traditions of the temple were wrong?

[We're the authorities and we didn't give you our permission]

– so who do you think you are?

They were trying to put Jesus in His place and then arrest him. Surely he would wilt under their power and authority!

But, Jesus' authority had been challenged before in the Gospel of Mark. Back in ch. 2 He forgave the sins of the paralytic. The scribes in Capernaum scratched their heads and questioned this in their hearts.....

“Who does he think He is? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

Amazingly, Jesus perceived what was going on in their hearts and said, “**But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins**” – he said to the paralytic – “**I say to you rise, pick up your bed and go home.**” And he did. *Authority challenged/ Authority confirmed!*

But what would Jesus do here in Jerusalem to answer this question of authority? Well, as Jesus was prone to do, He answered a question with a question...a brilliant question; if this were a game of chess, Jesus could have said, “**check-mate!**”

So, the next thing we see is Authority Confirmed

This power team of religious leaders came to put Jesus in His place, but He puts them in their place... And he does so with a simple question about John the Baptist - **[look at vv. 29 & 30]**

[READ]

They came to challenge Jesus, but he befuddles them w/ a simple question about John's baptism, which creates a **conundrum!**

If they say the baptism of John was from heaven, Jesus can say, "then why didn't you believe him?" – that's **v. 31**.

If it was from God, why didn't you get baptized with all the other folks who were going out to the Jordan River?

Next option [v. 32] – you can say John's baptism was from man [just a man-made thing]– but if you do that you'll have a lot of people mad because they believed John was a prophet from God. Therefore, when it came to option 2 these leaders feared the backlash. So they answered Jesus with "**We do not know.**"

In turn, Jesus doesn't answer their question about His authority.

Check-mate! [Pause]

I'm sure they were ticked, Jesus' authority was still intact, theirs was tattered and silenced.

Sadly, these leaders were driven by fear, greed, power, and pride and it was soon going to cost Jesus His life.

They needed to fear God more than men. They needed to love God more than money and power – but they didn't.

Churches today must beware of selfish, materialistic, people-pleasing leaders inside the church – but we also need to beware of these **pit-falls** inside our own hearts.

So Yes, look at their flaws, but then look in the mirror [questions]

What we need and what these leaders needed was faith and submission to Christ and His word,but instead they were blind, faithless shepherds like we see described in Is. 56 & Ez. 34 - Ezekiel emphasizes their selfishness...

You feed yourselves. You clothe yourselves, but not the sheep

And it sounds weird saying these things about religious leaders, but remember Nicodemus in Jn 3? He may have been the most prominent teacher in Israel [if anyone was religious it was Nicodemus], but Jesus told him he needed to be born again of water & the spirit. He needed faith and cleansing and a spiritual rebirth.

A spiritual transformation

I find it interesting that Jesus uses the question of John's baptism because John preached a baptism of repentance from sin and a preparation for the Messiah – and he says this about Jesus in

Mk. 1 “**after me comes one who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.**”

In other words, Jesus Messiah will, by the penetrating power of the Holy Spirit, cleanse your soul & save you from your sins.

And so a really important question to ask yourself this morning is “am I religious or have I been cleansed & transformed thru faith & repentance in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit?”

Is. 29 comes to mind where God says, “**they honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.**”

-You can be very religious and yet be far from God. Predatory Priests

-You can focus on a religious place like the Muslims who pray toward *Mecca* in Saudi Arabia 5 times a day and are supposed to make a spiritual pilgrimage there. They are very religious, but they are far from God.

-You can attend a mega church and be enamored w/ the size of the building or perhaps the quaintness of a smaller church...

and still be far from God.

And let's be honest, a month from now we'll be **hanging the greens** for Christmas w/ all the traditions and sentimentality that go along w/ it. It's a great time of the year. We can enjoy the carols & the advent candles and the story of the baby Jesus ---

and yet we can be **far from God**, because Christ's birth, death & resurrection of Christ for our sins hasn't been baptized into our hearts by faith and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Ray Lidecka sat in these pews for 40 yrs. before Pastor Riggs asked him one day about the condition of his heart and then led him into a personal relationship w/ Jesus Christ. Ray was religious. He liked this place. This building w/ all its religious symbols & services & people, but that couldn't take away his sins and give him new life.

-Nor can a catholic shrine or a cathedral or Herod's temple in the time of Jesus [which was twice the size of Solomon's temple] - none of these places, ***in and of themselves***, can transform a person and put them in a right relationship w/ the Lord.

-Nor can a saint or a priest or a pastor or your religious heritage.

-Nor can going thru the motions of religious practice – attending & singing & praying & giving & taking communion – all good things, but we are saved by faith, not works – **Eph. 2:8&9 quote**

Only God can save you

and **only** thru faith in His Son Jesus Christ.

The temple was never meant to be substitute for God Himself. Sentimental/External/Ornamental faith, can never be a substitute for ***“sin saving/life changing faith”*** rooted in God's Son and the Scriptures that point to Him all so clearly.

So let us submit to the truth & power & authority & humility & love of Jesus Christ! Trust Him as your sin-bearer, Follow Him as your Lord & Good Shepherd!

The Jewish leaders should have known that Jesus was the Christ by the way He came into Jerusalem and fulfilled the Scriptures.

They should have **believed** and **bowed** before Him,
but they would not.... and so Jesus tells them a parable –

Authority Rejected And before I read the parable let me connect the dots, which is not too hard to do...

The man/the planter/the owner of the vineyard is God.

The vineyard is the nation of Israel

The tenant farmers who work the vineyard are Israel's religious leaders

The owner's servants who come to collect a portion are the OT prophets

The son who comes last is Jesus, the Son of God.

[Ok with that in mind let me **read Mark 12:1-8**]

The backdrop of this parable is probably the Vineyard Song in Is. 5 that was read for us at the beginning of the service. It's about a vineyard gone wrong... producing bad grapes.

Jesus' variation on this is a vineyard where the tenant farmers [the religious leaders] have gone wrong – historically they rejected & mistreated God's prophets time after time

Micaiah, Jeremiah & Zechariah to name just a few...

It was an historical rejection of God!

Finally the owner in the parable sends his son. The tenants thot, "here comes the son, the owner must have died." By law, the ownership passes to us if there is no heir...so they reject & kill the son & throw his body outside the vineyard much like Jesus was crucified outside Jerusalem. ***Our vineyard. Our control.***
It's a disturbing parable, but filled with truth./

#1 It shows calcified hearts – and there’s a warning [look at v. 9]
Reject God’s Son and you will fall under God’s judgment!

But #2 Did you notice the patient mercy of God? Again and again He sent His servants/prophets to the leaders of Israel [and to the people of Israel] to *warn them* and *offer them mercy* if they repent. And then in time, He sent **His Beloved Son**
Do you see the patient/relentless love of God?

Time after time, like the waves of the ocean, God lovingly called religious leaders to repent & believe & submit.
And perhaps He’s been doing that with you for yrs. or right now.
Stop rejecting His love & authority. Stop smoothing over your sins w/ religiosity. You know there’s something missing in your life. Invite Him into your life today. Ask Him to cleanse you & change you by the power of the Holy Spirit. [pause]

Well, the religious leaders didn’t believe & bow to Christ. They rejected Him, but that was not the end of the story, it was just the beginning. [look at vv. 10 & 11] This is from Ps. 118 - a Messianic Psalm
Jesus was like a rejected stone discarded near Herod’s temple. He quotes Ps. 118 - the stone these leaders rejected has become the cornerstone of a new temple, a marvelous salvation. Ps. 118 identifies the cornerstone of salvation [it’s the God of salvation].

²¹ I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.

²² The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

Jesus personalizes Ps. 118 in His parable. He is the cornerstone of salvation, a new temple, & He is the final sacrifice for sin
I saw a story this week of a mom who postponed chemo because she was pregnant. Her daughter lived, but after a 4 yr. battle she died of cancer. She sacrificed her life for her daughter. It’s a touching and noble story.

Even more so is the story of Christ – He gave His life for us by taking our cancerous sin & rebellion upon Himself. He gave His life to forgive us.

And not only that, He gives us life every bit as real as the life that mother gave to her daughter [but even more so because His is abundant, transforming, eternal life].

May we all believe and bow before Christ today. Amen.