

Mark 11:27-33 Shall His Empire Be Falls Ch. PM 6/25/2023

We as Christians know that Jesus is the King of Kings. Paul wrote in Romans 1:4, that He was, “...*declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.*” The truth is that Jesus is the Son of God, who died and rose again for our redemption. Because that is true, we gladly worship Christ, we gladly serve Christ, and we cherish His rule in all of our life. That is our main point... **Because Jesus has all authority (both church/world), we gladly worship/serve Him, and cherish His rule in all of life.**

1. Disregarding the truth: the priests/scribes asked Jesus a question without being interested in the true answer. (v.27-28)

In verse 27, we are told that Jesus “*was walking in the temple...*” This was not a tour or a stroll. Jesus had made His presence known as a teaching rabbi. We saw that back in verse 17, “*and He was teaching them....*” And again in verse 18, “*...and the crowds were astonished at His teaching...*” Jesus was walking in the temple as a teacher. He was walking and teaching without obstruction or hindrance. The crowds were benefiting. But in contrast to the crowds, what do we read in verse 27 flowing into verse 28 that the temple leaders were doing? Were they benefiting from His teaching? No. Were they learning and being astonished? No. Look at verse 27, and let’s read what Mark showed us about the leaders. “*...the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to Him and they said to Him, “By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you authority to do them?”*” Do you see the showdown? The leaders believed that they were in charge of the temple, so they were interested in authority lines, power, influence and chain of command. They were interested in who could tell whom to teach, and who could tell whom not to teach, within the temple. Do you see the core of the scuffle? Jesus had not asked the temple leaders for permission to speak in THEIR temple! What the temple leaders meant by their question was a power move - since WE did not give you permission for activity in our temple, then you couldn’t possibly have permission to speak in the temple and cleanse the temple. A Galilean preacher cannot just walk into our temple and start teaching in here and upending tables in here, without status being granted from US!

But Jesus had already done so. They had not been able to prevent Him so far, and this current challenge was their first showdown. They wanted to know how Jesus figured that He had a right to do that, and their assumption was that He had no such right! How would Jesus answer that question?

There is One who could authorize Jesus to teach in the temple, and there is One who could authorize Jesus to cleanse the temple. There is One who had given all authority to Jesus in the temple. This would require the temple leaders to listen and learn something. But they were not open to listening and learning.

They were interested in a gotcha question. They asked Jesus about authority because they thought that they had trapped Jesus into disregarding proper authority and being a maverick and teaching without permission and overturning tables without permission. But the truth was different from what the temple leaders expected. Jesus did have permission! That is a possibility for which the temple leaders were not prepared.

They were disregarding the truth. Jesus was doing the opposite...

2. Revealing the truth: Jesus revealed that the same Source Who gave John the Baptist the authority to baptize, also gave Jesus the authority over the temple. (v.29-30)

In verse 29, Jesus answered them with a question for them to answer Him! Jesus presented a condition. The condition was, the temple leaders would have to first answer His question, and then Jesus would answer their question. If they answer, Jesus will answer. But if they do NOT answer, Jesus will not answer.

Asking a counter-question was a recognized and accepted move or tactic in both ancient Greek and ancient Jewish debating and discussions. Game on!

Verse 30, Jesus asked “*Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer Me.*”

This was brilliant on the part of Jesus! For Jesus to point to the baptism of John, the most distinctive and memorable feature of the public activity of John the Baptist, the activity from which John got his title John the Baptist, was for Jesus to point to the whole ministry of John the Baptist. It was an incredible ministry, and everyone knew about it. Their verdict on the ministry of John the Baptist would be their verdict on the ministry of Jesus! If they accepted John’s ministry and John’s authority, then they would accept the greater ministry of Jesus and the greater authority of Jesus!

In verse 30, by Jesus comparing His authority with the authority of John the Baptist, invited them to draw two conclusions. 1) That the authorization of Jesus was “*from heaven*” just as John’s authorization was from heaven. 2) that Jesus Himself is not less important than John the Baptist. Remember how Mark has highlighted the importance of John the Baptist? Mark 1:2-4, “*Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, 3 the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’” 4 John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And verse 8 I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.*”

So, we have been waiting since the opening words of the Gospel of Mark for the coming Lord to be identified, the very One for whom John the Baptist was preparing the way, and the One about whom Isaiah had long ago prophesied. Jesus is the One with the greater mission than John the Baptist. The role of Jesus is

prophetic and points to things future. For those who are listening carefully to Jesus, Jesus was giving an answer and sharing His identity and the source of His authority!

3. Exposing the truth: Jesus exposed the priests/scribes' inability to distinguish between authority from God vs. man. (v.31-33)

Verse 31, the temple leaders wrestled with how to answer Jesus.

Option A: if they say the ministry of John the Baptist was from heaven, then Jesus would challenge as temple leaders, why would they not believe the teaching of John? Option A would not work. Why? Because they did not believe the teaching of John, and did not want to be inconsistent and discredited by saying John's was from God, but yet they did not believe God and God's messenger!

Option B: if they say the ministry of John the Baptist was from man (which means that God was not in it, and that John was not speaking truly spiritual things from God), then....there is no answer. The narrator has to take over and explain to us that the reason the temple leaders were not able to answer truthfully is that they were afraid of the crowds of people. What does that mean? Well, if they said John the Baptist was a fake, then the crowds would get upset with the temple leaders. Why? Because they people believed that John was truly a prophet of God, which he was!

Verse 33, so, they could not answer option A, and they could not answer option B. They were really stuck. What should they say to Jesus, who was waiting? Verse 33, they answered Jesus, "We do not know." Stop. Freeze. What do we have here? The temple leaders in an official and public debate in the temple were asked whether the massive public ministry of John the Baptist was fake or true, and their official answer is, "We don't know." That had to be embarrassing to say that. Not that "We would rather not answer the question" No. They said, "We don't know." But what else could the temple leaders say? They were exposed.

What were they exposed to be? They were exposed to be what they really were. What were they really? The temple leaders were those who did not have the ability to do their jobs as chief priests, as scribes, or as elders. They could not be leaders in God's temple, because they did not have the ability to distinguish between something from God and something not from God. They lacked spiritual discernment. How do we know that?

Consider the big picture in our passage - what were they doing? They were having a conversation with the Almighty, in the flesh! Did they realize that? No!

They were talking to the second person of the Trinity!

They were looking right at the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Lord of Glory who had taken on a human body! He was two natures and one person.

They had no discernment to notice that John was working for God, and they had not discernment to notice that Jesus IS God! That is how we know that they lacked spiritual discernment!

In the space of just these 7 verses, Mark has showed us what happened in the space of just a few minutes when Jesus was in the temple that day, verbally dueling with the temple leaders. Jesus showed the crowds that His ministry was from God, and none of the temple leaders was from God. In just a few minutes, the authority of Jesus was established, and the lack of authority of the temple leaders was exposed. That is why I gave the title to this sermon that I did, “Shall His Empire Be.” Jesus walked into the temple, and demonstrated that He had all authority over the temple, and that authority had been given to Him by God the Father.

Conclusion:

1. When we gather to worship, we discern that Christ is here by His Spirit.

In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul was writing that speaking in tongues was different from prophesying, which was explaining, *“If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? 24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, 25 the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.”* 1 Corinthians 14:23-25 When we gather to worship, we discern that Christ is here by His Spirit. Where God’s Word is explained, God is really among us, encouraging us and ruling over His church.

2. Beware of depending too much on ordained religious leaders, because sometimes they go wrong.

This is not new. It is abundantly evidenced in the OT, the NT and church history. Let me give a few examples. Aaron set up a golden calf. Exodus 32:4 Uriaah the high priest in the time of Ahaz, built a new altar. 2 Kings 16:11 Pashhur and other priests beat the prophet Jeremiah. Jer. 20:12

In the dark ages leading up to the Reformation, many clergy went wrong with teachings of salvation by works, not salvation by grace.

Today, many clergy and church leaders are allowing and endorsing in their churches an ethic that is an abomination to God.

And the New Testament often warns us about teachers, such as Hebrews 5:12, *“though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food...”*

There is no church organization that ordains men to infallibility – not Presbyterians, Baptists, Lutherans, Catholics, Anglicans, or non-denominational leaders. No pastors, no elders, and no deacons are perfect. At their best, church leaders are only flesh and blood, and God uses them, despite their errors in doctrine and in life. We test all leaders by the Word of God. Leaders are followed

as far as they follow Scripture, and no further. There is only One Priest who makes no mistakes, and that is Jesus Himself. We lean entirely on Him, and we will never be disappointed.

3. We gladly submit to Christ as our King in all things. Who else would be our king? We look for Christ's commands, Christ's instructions. Ephesians 5:10, "...try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord." That is gladly submitting to Christ as our King for all of life. Over the years we have seen a trend in America - we have had so many people go away to find themselves. What does that really mean? Isn't that really just a desire to find a place where I need not answer to God's authority - to the coach, to my parents, to teachers at school, to my supervisor at work or to anyone? I can be my own boss! And what sort of boss would I be to myself? Consider what C.S.Lewis wrote in his book Mere Christianity, "Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in."

Matthew 6:33, "*Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*"

Consider what Jesus said 10 chapters earlier in Mark 1:15, "...*the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.*" Jesus is The King was saying that the Kingdom of God has drawn near. We gladly submit to Christ as our King in all things, by repenting and believing the good news.

We are overjoyed that Christ is the head of His church. We are thrilled that Christ shall have dominion, over land and sea, earth's remotest regions, shall His empire be.