

## **Sermon 106: Christ's Authority and the Gospel He Preached: Luke 20:1-8**

**Text: Luke 20:1-8** "And it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him with the elders, And spake unto him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority? And he answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer me: The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him not? But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet. And they answered, that they could not tell whence it was. And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things..."

**Summary:** Christ's primary contention with the religious leaders centered on His inherent right to teach and act as if He was God in flesh.

**Proposition:** God wants us to see Christ's true identity and embrace what He has done to redeem us to the Father.

### **Introduction:** Background

- **This is the final week of Christ's pre-passion ministry.**
- **He has repeatedly emphasized the necessity of the cross:**
  - **Matthew 16:21** "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day..."
  - **Luke 9:22** "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day..."
  - **Luke 17:25** "First must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation..."
- **The triumphal entry two days earlier was significant in three ways:**
  - **Prophetic: John 12:15-16** "Thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him..."
  - **Symbolic:**
    - **Solomon: 1 Kings 1:33** "The king also said unto them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause

Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon..."

- **Jehu: 2 Kings 9:12-13** "Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel. Then they hastened, and took every man his garment, and put it under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king..."
- **Explosive: Luke 19:39-40** "Some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out..."
- **This was the culmination of Christ's confrontation with the religious leaders:** The next day, Judas covenanted with the religious leaders to turn Christ over to them.
  - **20:1** "On one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him with the elders
  - **22:2-6** "And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people. Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude..."

**Truth 1: Christ's primary contention centered on authority: 20:2** "Tell us, by what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority?"

- **The immediate catalyst for this confrontation: Luke 19:46** "It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves..."
- **Authority in this instance means "right" not "strength or enabling:"**
  - **Inherent authority:** Who do you think you are?
  - **Delegated authority:** Who do you claim to represent?
- **The irony of their question concerning "authority:"**
  - **The establishment of the priesthood: Numbers 18:7** "Thou and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest's office for every thing of the altar, and within the vail; and ye shall serve: I have given your priest's office unto you as a service of gift: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death..."
  - **The re-establishment after the exile: Ezra 2:62** "These sought their register among those that were reckoned by

genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood..."

- **Their current situation: John 11:48-50** "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them...it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not..."
- **Examples in Luke where Christ's authority was highlighted:**
  - **He taught as one who possessed inherent authority: Luke 4:32** "They were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power..."
  - **He commanded demons as one possessing inherent authority: Luke 4:36** "What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out..."
  - **He healed and forgave sins as one possessing inherent authority of the effects of the curse in two senses: Luke 5:24** "That ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house..."
  - **He spoke as one possessing inherent authority over final judgment: Luke 12:5** "Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell..."
- **Christ has the "authority" to do and say what He has done and said, but they are rejecting this authority.**

**Truth 2: He focused the exchange with a probing question: 20:3** "I will also ask you one thing; and answer me ..."

- **Christ's question: 20:4** "The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?"
- **Christ's motive:** He demonstrated that they were actively rejecting Scripture's witness.
  - **Isaiah's prophecy: Isaiah 40:3** "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God..."
  - **John's preaching:**
    - **Matthew 3:2** "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand..."
    - **John 1:23** "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias..."

- **John 1:26-27** "I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose..."
- **John's proclamation: John 1:29** "John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world..."
- **The Father and Spirit's witness: Luke 3:22** "And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased..."
- **The Implication of these witnesses: John 8:24** "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins..."

**Truth 3: Their unbelief was rooted in rebellion not ignorance: 20:5**  
 "And they reasoned with themselves... And they answered, that they could not tell..."

- **These men were not ignorant:**
  - They knew the Scriptures:
  - They knew all the details from Christ's ministry:
  - They knew their own spurious claim to the priesthood:
  - They were internally divided, yet had a common Enemy:
- **Their response: 20:5-7** "They reasoned with themselves..."
  - **Option 1:** "If we shall say, from heaven; he will say, why then believed ye him not?"
    - **If we say from God, then He will ask us why we rejected the witness of the Law and the Prophets.**
  - **Option 2:** "If we say, of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet..."
    - **If we say from man, then we will lose our influence with the people and probably face their wrath as an out-of-control mob.**
  - **Answer:** "They answered, that they could not tell whence it was..."
    - "Could not..." should actually say "Would not..."
    - With open eyes, they rejected Christ.
- **The heart of their response:**
  - Their response was not aligned with truth or connected to a love for God and His word.
  - Their understanding of Scripture had nothing to do with their response.
  - They refused to look at the facts objectively, because their hearts were hardened to the truth.
  - They refused to face themselves honestly.

- Their unbelief was filled with hypocrisy and rebellion.

### **Applying the passage:**

- **Four Principles to accept:**

- You will not see what you do not want to see.
- What you love will cloud or enhance your judgment.
- A humble disposition toward God and His word is a prerequisite to understanding.
- God's grace humbles the heart before it reveals the truth.

- **There is nothing more important than the gospel:**

- **Christ came in the flesh to deal with our sin:**

- **John 1:14** "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us..."
- **Philippians 2:7-8** "He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant...he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross..."
- **1 John 3:5** "He was manifested to take away our sins..."

- **He dealt with our sin in the flesh:**

- **2 Corinthians 5:21** "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him..."
- **1 Peter 3:18** "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God..."
- **Galatians 3:13** "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us..."
- **Isaiah 53:5** "He was wounded for our transgressions...bruised for our iniquities..."
- **Isaiah 53:5** "His soul was made an offering for sin..."
- **Isaiah 51:10** "It pleased the LORD to bruise him..."

- **He conquered death in the resurrection: 1 Corinthians 15:57** "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ..."

- **Comforted in Christ:**

- **We are now redeemed and forgiven: Ephesians 1:7** "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins..."
- **We are now reconciled: 2 Corinthians 5:18** "God, has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ..."
- **We are now at peace with God: Ephesians 2:13** "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace..."
- **We are now free from condemnation: Romans 8:1** "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus..."

- **We are now accepted: Ephesians 1:6** "He hath made us accepted in the beloved..."
- **There is now nothing that can shake this position: Romans 8:39** Nothing can "Separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord..."