

Matthew 21:23-32 “Christmas-All Authority Belongs to Jesus”

12.24.17

YES...Today is Christmas Eve and tomorrow is Christmas! What an exciting time of year! It's hard to believe we're celebrating another Christmas! Truly, the older you get the faster they come. My grandparents used to tell me that all the time and I didn't believe them. I just thought they were old... Well, I guess now I'm feeling older... ☺

You know, the older I get, the more nostalgic I get and I think back to why I was a child at Christmas. I SO LOVED going to my grandparents' homes to celebrate Christmas! It was such a joyous time! I took for granted how care-free those childhood years were. What a blessing to be at grandma and grandpa's house and enjoy all the family and all the food and YES...the presents... But, you know what...now that I'm almost 50...I don't remember much about the presents. I miss the people.

No I bring this up to be melancholy, but to acknowledge a point. When I was at my grandparents' homes, I felt safe and I felt secure. As a child, it's easy to take for granted safety and security. And I believe I know why kids feel safe and secure? Because they are confident in the authority and love of those caring for them.

You see, with AUTHORITY, comes safety, security and protection...whether that be at Christmas or any time, for that matter. Today we're going to talk about Authority. On this Christmas Eve we're going to see from Matthew's Gospel that “**All Authority Belongs to Jesus.**”

I want to show you one verse of our text...just the first verse of it actually, before we look at the rest this morning...

Matthew 21:23

²³ And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?”

Authority... They asked: “By what authority are you doing these things?” Now think with me, via the image we showed you earlier...



that beautiful picture of Christmas. Christmas...of course, is the celebration of Jesus coming to this earth as a baby, born in Bethlehem. Jesus Christ, the Son of God is Emmanuel...God with us. He was the Word who became flesh and dwelled among us! And we will celebrate this fact tomorrow, December 25, 2017... 2,017 years since His birth. Thereby, the very way that we record time carries the weight and **the authority** of the birth of Jesus Christ. **Turn to Colossians 1 and I'll show you His authority!**

As you're turning, listen carefully, Jesus Christ came to this earth...born as a baby, just like we were, and yet, He carries with Him **all the authority** of all the universe in His being. Everything rises and falls with Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:13-18

¹³He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. ¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

Do you know what that last word we just read (preeminent) means? According to Dictionary.com it means: **“surpassing all others, having greatest authority.”** Jesus has the greatest authority of any human being who ever lived. He is the God/Man and it’s at the name of Jesus, that one day, “Every knee will bow and every tongue confess,” because He is preeminent and has all authority.

Do you believe that? Could a little baby...



...wrapped in rags...lying in a manger...could a baby have all authority...to the point that every knee will one day bow before Him? No, not a baby. But, that baby becomes a man...who will do this...



But, those other two men, who were hanging beside of Jesus stayed dead... Jesus got up and walked out of that tomb!



And because of that fact...He can claim authority over all of life and death! He is the way, the truth and the life...

Authority! What is authority? The dictionary says authority is: **“the power to have control, to give orders and make decisions.”** The word "authority" is a strong word. It carries with it a certain force or power. There can even be a certain air of intimidation when the word is

spoken. When we talk about authority, we as citizens, might think of the police or children think of parents, or a team, thinks of a coach, or workers think of a boss...or maybe privates in the Marines, think of a drill sergeant... **See the screens.**



I feel intimidated just looking at that picture. Authority carries with it a sense of respect, awe, and even fear. After all, the word "authority" denotes permission. It denotes privilege. It denotes power, rules, control, influence. When someone has authority, that means they have the ability to give orders and there is an expectation of obedience and consequences if there isn't obedience. Those in authority, have the ability to render judgments, to wield certain rights and privileges, because of their position. Jesus has all authority!

Yes, in the home, parents are to have the authority. In the streets, the police have authority. In the schools the principals have the authority. In business, on the job, in the plant...the boss has the authority. Authority! It's a powerful word! I'll ask again: Who has the most authority in the universe? Jesus Christ! Matthew tells us this in...

Matthew 28:18

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Jesus claimed that He had ALL AUTHORITY! In heaven and on earth! Folks...that's everywhere!

In Matthew 7:28, after He preached the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew records...

Matthew 7:28

²⁸ And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, ²⁹ for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

You see, the scribes quoted other Rabbis when they taught...but, Jesus quoted no one! He footnoted nothing. He didn't say He had gotten his truths from some Rabbi of the past... No! He said, "You have heard it said, BUT I SAY!" Yes, just spoke with authority. Why?

Because of what He did... What did Jesus do? He had authority to forgive sin. He had authority to cast out demons. He had the authority to heal every disease of every kind. He had authority over the elements. He turned water into wine...He even walked on water! He had power over death...because He not only raised the dead, like Lazarus...but, He Himself would rise from the dead. In fact, Jesus made it very clear that He had the authority over His own life...

John 10:18

¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

Now folks that's authority! Authority He had received from His Father. It's the authority that resided in Him as He laid in that manger...



As the song writer says: “Oh Come let us adore Him...Christ the Lord!” And you see, this is the essence of Christmas... God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son...to be born as baby...to become one of us...with an umbilical cord...to have a belly button!

He would grow up to become a man...a man who would proclaim authority over all! Remember this...



He showed authority and power over nature when He cursed the fig tree... The tree that had no fruit on it...and when He curse it...the green leaves withered up and turned brown and died at once. That's authority over nature! Over creation! And then, He went to the Temple and showed authority there as well. He incensed the religious leaders by cleansing the Temple...

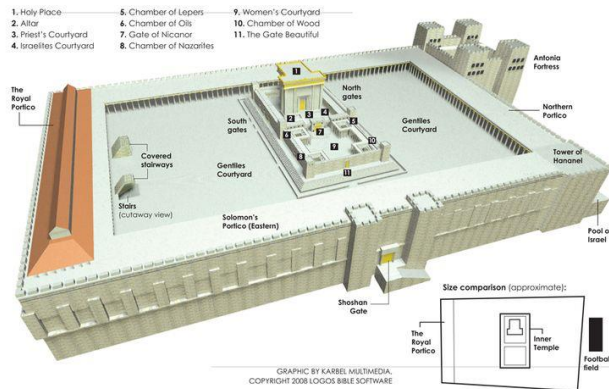


He said, “You have made MY HOUSE a den of thieves!” He was claiming authority over the Temple. He was proclaiming to be God. Because He was... He was Emmanuel...God with us!

And so He went to that Temple and cleansed it. Oh by the way, be reminded where Jesus was teaching in the Temple...see the screens...

Herod's Temple

King Herod the Great began renovations on the Second Temple approximately 20-19 BC. The entire temple wasn't completed until approximately 62-64 AD, only to be destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.



This was the rebuilt Temple...rebuilt by King Herod, who was a pagan...but, had it rebuilt so as to keep the Jews under control, by allowing them to keep their religion, even though Rome was in control. Jesus taught in the court of the Gentiles...which was the largest area in the Temple courtyard. Massive crowds would gather there to hear Jesus. And the chief priest and elders show up... See it again, **Matthew 21, verse 23...**

Matthew 21:23

²³ And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?"

The chief priests and elders knew Jesus didn't have a license or ordination to preach from the Sanhedrin. You see, the Sanhedrin would give a certificate or ordination for men to come in as Rabbis and be allowed to teach in the Temple. But, Jesus had no such permission, accreditation or approval to do so. He just went in and did it anyway...because He said, "This is my house" and because of that...He had the right to cleanse it!

But the Sanhedrin and the chief priests and elders were afraid of Jesus... **Jump down to verse 46.**

Matthew 21:46

⁴⁶ And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.

So, they were afraid of Jesus and they let Him continue to teach in the Temple... Now here's something that we must not miss. Look at how Jesus responds to these guys in **verse 24...** He's not actually going to give them an answer at all...

Matthew 21:24-26

²⁴ Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵ The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?" And they discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?'" ²⁶ But if we say, 'From man,' we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet."

Now they're in a pickle. Jesus is smarter than they are. He refused to answer their question, but instead He

showed that He had the authority and asked them a question. **Why did He ask them a question? Because giving them an answer would be showing the crowds that He was submitting to their authority and Jesus would not submit to men. We must submit to Him.**

You see, Jesus put them in a pickle because all of the people highly respected the ministry of John the Baptist as a prophet and Jesus knew this. So, if the leaders said John the Baptist's ministry was not of God, then those leaders knew the crowd would BOO THEM OUT OF THE PLACE!

But here's the kicker... If they said that John's ministry was of God...then, they would be acknowledging that what he proclaimed was true. And what did John proclaim? Look at it...

John 2:29-30

29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.'

Do you see the chief priest's dilemma? If they acknowledge that John the Baptist's ministry was from God...then, they will have to acknowledge that He is the Messiah! Wow of Wow!!!! What a stand-off!

Look at what they said... (It makes me laugh!)

Matthew 21:27

27 So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

Listen! They were supposed to know! The chief priests were the leaders (hint: CHIEF)...they were supposed to be able to give the right answers! Well, verse 25 tells us that: "they discussed it among themselves." The Greek word is "dialog-iz-o-mai," and it means to talk on and on and on...it's "BLAH, BLAH, BLAH." It's the Jeopardy music...

These guys were trained to know and yet, they were ignoring the facts right in front of their faces! They refused to acknowledge the truth! **Do you know people** who refuse to accept the truth... They say, "Don't confuse me with the facts!" **Listen, when unbelief investigates truth, unbelief always comes up with the wrong answer every time!!!**

"We don't know!!!"

So, who has the authority in this showdown? Jesus! And He proved it by not giving an answer and the chief priest's proved it by their lack of an answer! Oh, Jesus is good! And He's not going to cast pearls before swine! He's not going to explain Himself again... It's been three years of giving evidence of Who He IS...They've seen the evidence of His miracles...they know the truth and He's done! And so, Jesus is done explaining...

And so...to seal the deal with the crowds... He tells a parable...an indicting illustration about these pious religious leaders. **See verse 28, it's as if Jesus now turns to the crowds and asks:**

Matthew 21:28-32

²⁸ "What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' ²⁹ And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. ³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. ³² For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him."

I can almost feel the excitement in verse 31 when Jesus asked those fools, "Who did the will of the Father?" They were so excited to actually offer an answer. They said, "The first!" They didn't realize it...but, they had indicted themselves. They were the second son! What a rebuke Jesus levied to them!!! Literally Jesus said...the scum of the earth is going to get into the Kingdom of God before you.

Scum the earth? Yes...the phrase "Tax collectors and prostitutes" represented to the Jewish system of law the lowest of the low. After all, the tax collectors were Jews, who sold their souls to the Romans...to take money from their own countrymen. And the prostitutes...ladies who offered themselves at a price for pleasure!

But you see, these Scribes and Chief Priests were worse than the tax collectors...because they had sold their souls to the devil and they were worse than prostitutes, because they prostituted their positions of authority, (claiming to be men of God)...yet, were nothing more than pawns of Satan.

Look at verse 32 again...it's the key... Jesus points back to John the Baptist...

Matthew 21:32

³² For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, **you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.**

Listen very carefully. Jesus said you saw John, my cousin...a man with a righteous life preach a righteous message about me and you refused to believe. And then you saw tax collectors (like Matthew, who was formerly a tax collector) and prostitutes repent and have their lives transformed, and you refused to believe. Then you saw me... you witnessed my miracles and saw the dead raised to life (like Lazarus...oh they knew about Lazarus) and you refused to believe. Jesus said, "You have rejected the truth of who I am at every turn."

Is that you today? Those men rejected the authority of Jesus. They refused to believe! They refused to submit to Him!

Let me ask you this: Does Jesus have the right to tell us to surrender to His authority? Yes. Why? Because He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. But, if that does do it for you...maybe this will...



He did this for you... He did that so that you wouldn't have to go to Hell. Do you understand that? Jesus didn't come and do that to just be AN ADD ON to your life... He's not extra pillow for your head... He did that so you could stay out of Hell! Oh, how I pray everyone in this room understands what hangs in the balance right now! YOUR ETERNITY!

Have you surrendered to Him, if not, why not? Why in the world would you not surrender to a man who did that for you? Will you look at the evidence and be like the Chief Priests and Scribes who refused to believe... Will you refuse to place your trust in Jesus? The tax collectors and the prostitutes saw the evidence and changed their minds! They gave the authority of their lives over to Jesus. Will you?

You see, some thing or some one is calling the shots in your life. Who is it? Who has the authority in your life? Who is in the driver's seat of your life? Do you want to know how you can tell? You can tell by your decisions.

...by how you treat people

...by how react to stressful situations

...by how you speak to your family under the roof of your home

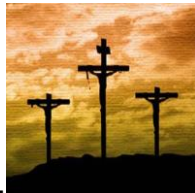
... by what you do with your money and your time...and your leisure and your pleasure...

Who is calling the shots in your life? You or Jesus?

Listen, and we're done... You can sit here and listen to this pastor preach on this Sunday before Christmas. You can listen to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. You can even believe that God sent His Only Son to this earth to be born as a baby... You can believe this...



You can even believe this...



...and this...



...but the question is:

have you surrendered the authority of your life over to Jesus? Does He control your time, your tweets, your Facebook posts, how you spend your money, who you hang out with.

Look into your heart? What do you see? Who is on the throne of your life? Oh, listen...you are not here by accident. God brought you here to know the truth! I pray you will choose to receive Jesus today...this Sunday before Christmas and give Him the authority of your life.