

Matthew 21:12-27

“The King’s Authority”

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Intro. Who is Jesus to tell someone what is true worship or faith? What authority does Jesus have to tell you how to live your life? What right does Jesus have to declare something wrong or right, good or bad, moral or immoral? What about areas where you might disagree with Jesus: e.g. there is only one true God, only one way to heaven, sexual sin, love your neighbor, love your enemy, don’t lie, don’t covet, don’t gossip, care for the poor, the orphan, the widow, the stranger, serve, give, worship, pray ...? Why should you yield your life to Jesus?

Study Guide Qs

1. What are some specific areas or issues where people (professing believers and non-believers) may struggle with Jesus’ authority in their life?
2. How has knowing Jesus better made it easier for you to yield to His authority?
3. Discuss how worship of God and true faith effect every area of a person’s life (and therefore there is no area where Jesus should not have authority in your life).
4. How has yielding to Jesus changed your life?

Subject: Jesus authority

Object: Yield to Jesus

Context: Triumphal entry into Jerusalem, 4 days before Passover, Jewish pilgrims fill the city, and there is a stir that Jesus has entered Jerusalem. Could He be the Messiah?

A. Jesus’ authority and worship [12-17]

12 Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. **13** And He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’”

1. Jesus has authority to define acceptable worship of God [12-13]

Jesus entered the temple [12] referring to the outermost court (The Court of the Gentiles). Then there was a court for Jewish women, and then Jewish men. The actual sanctuary of the temple was only entered by priests, and the Holy of Holies was only entered by the High

Priest once a year on Yom Kippur. Business or marketplace activities were conducted at the court of the Gentiles [12]. Money changers, for a fee, converted foreign currency, to the Jewish Sheckel required to pay taxes to support the temple. Sacrifices were available to purchase, at a premium price, so people would not need to bring sacrifices from home to Jerusalem, and were assured the sacrifice was inspected and approved. Per Josephus, the Jewish historian, more than 200,000 lambs were offered at Passover. Doves [12] were the offering of the poorest and most vulnerable people. The system tended to exploit people who were coming to worship God. Thus, Jesus describes those who exploited as a “den of thieves” [13] and drove them out. Jesus asserts authority when He declares the temple is “My house” [13]. God desires that the temple be a place of prayer and worship (for all nations) [13] [Is. 56:7]. This was the second time that Jesus came to the temple and sought to remove those who exploited worshipers. There was a similar event at the start of His ministry [Jn. 2:13-17].

Jn. 4:23-24 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴ God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

a. Believers are the temple of God [2 Cor. 6:16]. And there presumably is need for cleansing to align our will with Jesus’ will so that we are worshiping in spirit and truth.

i. Unfortunately, there are still a few exploiters, and we can trust that Jesus will deal with them. Don’t let them be an obstacle to your worship of God, and yielding to Jesus.

b. We are to be a house of prayer, people who are yielded to, dependent upon, and in intimate communication with God.

2. Jesus has authority to restore for the glory and praise of God [14-17]

¹⁴ Then *the* blind and *the* lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. ¹⁵ But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant ¹⁶ and said to Him, “Do You hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes. Have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise’?” ¹⁷ Then He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and He lodged there.

Jesus healed the blind and lame who came to Him at the temple [14]. The religious leaders were angry that people were coming to Jesus, He was healing them, and children were praising Him as the Messiah [15-16]. Jesus’ mercy, compassion and restoration bring glory to God. Jesus quotes Ps. 8:2 [16] to explain God’s plan for His children to praise Him. Then Jesus departed to Bethany and presumably lodged with Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

a. Jesus does not abuse authority, but uses His authority to bless and restore to Gods’ praise. The better we know that Jesus’ nature is good and loving, as proven by His sacrifice at the cross, the more that we want to yield our will to His.

B. Jesus' authority and faith [18-22]

1. Jesus has authority to declare true faith [18-20] Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. ¹⁹ And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, "Let no fruit grow on you ever again." Immediately the fig tree withered away.²⁰ And when the disciples saw *it*, they marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither away so soon?" The next morning Jesus was returning to Jerusalem and was hungry [18]. He saw a fig tree that should have had fruit but there was no fruit only leaves [19]. Fig trees were plentiful in the region and their fruit was part of the diet. , a fig tree bears fruit ten months per year. The leaves would give an outward appearance that there was fruit, but there was none. Jesus cursed the fig tree and immediately it withered away, and the disciples marveled [19-20]. Why was this fig tree the only thing that Jesus cursed? Adam and Eve tried to cover their sin with fig leaves [Gen. 3:7], but only God can forgive sin. Also, the fig tree was associated with Israel [Jer. 8:13, Hos. 9:10] and the Jewish leaders' failure to receive Jesus would result in judgment. And it may refer to someone who claims to follow God but bears no fruit of spiritual transformation and thus there is no saving faith in Christ. All three reasons point to a lack of faith in Jesus' work and authority.

2. Jesus encourages and empowers the faithful [21-22]

²¹ So Jesus answered and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' it will be done.²² And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

Jesus encourages His followers that His power will be given to the faithful to overcome obstacles and advance God's kingdom. Christ's followers avail themselves of power through prayer consistent with God's will and in faith. A vibrant prayer life is evidence of real faith.

C. Jesus' authority questioned [23-27]

²³ Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?" ²⁴ But Jesus answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: ²⁵ The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?" And they reasoned 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 men,' we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet." ²⁷ So they answered Jesus and said, "We do not know." And He said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

1. What is the source of Jesus' authority? The Jewish leaders question Jesus' authority to cleanse the temple, receive praise as Messiah, and to teach [23]. The religious leaders had not granted Jesus authority.

Mt. 28:18-20 All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth ...

2. Jesus asks a question to those who question His authority:

Jesus challenges them with a question whether John the Baptist's ministry was from God or man [25]. The religious leaders realize that if they acknowledge that John's ministry is from God and John pointed to Jesus as Messiah [Jn.1:29] then they have the answer to their question – Jesus' authority is from God [25]. If they say that John's ministry was simply from man, the masses would stone them [Lu. 20:6] for the people recognized John as a prophet [26]. The religious leaders refuse to answer [27] thereby disqualifying themselves from judging Jesus' authority. ***What keeps you from yielding to Jesus?***