

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #252

Tuesday... Day of Testing and Teaching

Jesus' Authority is Questioned

MK 11.27-33 (Parallel Text: MT 21.23-27; LK 20.1-8)

27 They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, ^Lteaching the people and preaching the gospel, ^Mthe chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him.

28 "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you authority to do this?"

29 Jesus replied, *"I will ^{MT}also ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. 30 John's practice of immersing-- ^{MT}where did it come from? ^MWas it from heaven, or of human origin?*

"I command you to tell me!"

31 They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?'" 32 But if we say, 'Of human origin'--^{MT}we are afraid of the people, ^Lfor they will all stone us. They are convinced that John was a prophet."

33 ^MSo they answered Jesus, "We don't know."

Jesus said, *"Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."*

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	The Temple Courts in Jerusalem
Timeline	Early April (Month 39)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage VIII: Passion Week
	C. Tuesday: Day of Testing and Teaching
Title	2. Jesus' Authority is Questioned

COMMENT:

As soon as Jesus arrived in the Temple compound, early Tuesday morning, his examination by the Jewish leadership began. The only thing that kept it from becoming an inquisition was the presence of the huge crowd that came to hang on Jesus' words. They loved to hear him speak.

After receiving public acclamation as the Messiah on Sunday, and the authority that Jesus had demonstrated on Monday, it is no wonder that the key issue that dominated all the testing that occurred on Tuesday was the nature of Jesus's authority. The day began with two related questions:

(1) "By what authority are you doing these things?"

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(2) "Who gave you authority to do this?"

Jesus expressed his authority by replying with his own question. In his culture, the act of asking a question in a setting like this was a teaching tool—an expression of authority—rather than a request for information. By asking Jesus these questions the leadership was attempting to take authority over him. His answer in the form of a question retained the authority he had taken over them by cleansing the Temple the day before.

Jesus' question was brilliant. It took the leadership straight back to the point where they had begun to rebel against God's authority as a group. Jesus asked about the authority behind John the Immerser's practice of immersion. It was not authorized by these same leaders—it did not arise from their authority. Where then did John's authority to immerse come from? God, or human origin?

John had testified that God had called him to bear witness concerning the Messiah, and commanded him to immerse so that the Messiah would be revealed to Israel through it (JN 1.19-34). The leadership had asked John directly about his authority to baptize, and John had told them clearly that it came directly from God.

They had never acknowledged this, or faced the truth that God was rebuking and confronting them as leaders through John. Jesus brought them back to this initial issue, that still remained as a barrier between them and God. Refusing to deal with the issue did not remove its urgency; it heightened it over time.

The reply of the leaders was most revealing. Instead of finally dealing with the claim of God's authority upon them, they reasoned together on the basis of the public consequences of their choices, rather than the truth itself. "If we say A, then the people will do B. If we choose C, then the people will do D."

All of their reasoning was about the political impact of their decision, not the intrinsic meaning of the truth of God's authority as it was confronting them through John, and now Jesus. Because they did not want to face either of the consequences their answer would create, the leaders tried to opt out by saying, "We do not know know where John's authority came from." They refused to face the truth and deal with it.

So, Jesus told them that he would not answer their question either. Since they were continuing to refuse to deal with the truth, answering the same question that John had already answered for them would accomplish nothing. Jesus would not empower their disobedience—he left them to face it, if they would. They refused to do so.

In this way Jesus retained his authority over them, and forced them to acknowledge their total lack of sincerity in asking him a question that they had no intention of listening to. It was all hypocrisy.

APPLICATION:

Jesus had taught in earlier parables that if we do not have any of the fruit of obedience to the truth in our lives, then the truth that we do have will be taken from us. This encounter gave a live demonstration of this principle in action. By refusing to face the truth, the leaders lost the ability to retain the knowledge of the truth that they had been given.

Disobedience generates more disobedience like fertilized, watered weeds only breed more. Obedience to past revelations of the truth results in a harvest of greater revelation, and more opportunities for obedience. This is why the direction of sin is ever away from God, in increasing momentum.

Is there some aspect of the truth that you have been refusing to acknowledge?

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You cannot move on in your relationship to God until you deal with that. Denial stonewalls your progress in following Jesus.

What truth do you need to honestly face today?

All of Jesus' compassion, comfort and grace awaits you as you turn to him for help. He will see you through the short-term pain, and exchange it for full, eternal joy. Go for it!