



The Conflict Intensifies

Key idea:

Jesus' teaching, actions, and authority consistently caused amazement among the people, but they also prompted fear and opposition, especially among the leaders, and this pattern intensified as Jesus ministered in Jerusalem during His final week.

Key text:

They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the 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 ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. ³⁰ John's baptism — was it from heaven, or from men? 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, 'From men' . . ." (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.) ³³ So they answered Jesus, "We don't know." Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things." (Mark 11:27-33)

Key points:

1. During Jesus' ministry in Galilee, His teaching, actions, and authority caused amazement among the people, but it also brought out strong opposition, especially from leaders who feared His popularity, disagreed with His teachings and actions, and questioned His authority.
2. After Jesus cleansed the Temple and started teaching the people, a delegation from the Sanhedrin (comprised of chief priests, scribes, and elders) came to Jesus to question by what authority He was doing these things.
3. Jesus responds to the delegations question with a question of His own: was John's baptism done by the authority of God or only by human authority?
 - a. This question pointed to the fact that John was the forerunner to Jesus and their ministries were inextricably linked.

- b. This was meant to cause the delegation (and ultimately the Sanhedrin) to reflect on the ministry of John and Jesus to see that their authority was from heaven!
- c. Instead of honest reflection, the delegation merely viewed the question as a trap, and because they feared the response of the people if they denied John was commissioned by God, they said they could not answer the question.
- d. Jesus then refused to answer their question - for their answer showed they were not honestly seeking the truth.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's teaching stood out most to you? Why?
2. What about Jesus' teaching caused such amazement to the people? Was it His content, His method, or His delivery? What about His teaching made them sense His authority?
3. Why did Jesus' actions prompt amazements from the crowds? How did His works display His authority (and thus provide an answer to the question of the delegation and Sanhedrin)?
4. Why is it important to understand that opposition to Jesus occurred in both Galilee and Jerusalem?
5. Why is it important to understand that opposition to Jesus arose from the chief priests, the scribes, the elders, and the Pharisees?
6. At various times Mark indicates that people opposed Jesus because He seemed to claim authority that belonged to God alone (Mark 2:7), because His teaching and practices violated customs such as the Sabbath (Mark 2:24; 3:2, 6), and because of His popularity with the people (Mark 11:18). How do I think these different causes coalesced into their decision to reject Jesus and seek for a way to have Him put to death?
7. Why doesn't Jesus merely answer the delegations' question by stating that His authority is from God? He will do this when standing in front of the High Priest (Mark 14:62), so why not do it now?
8. Proverbs 26:4-5 instruct us "Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself. ⁵ Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes." How do I know which proverb to apply in a specific instance? How do

I know when I should answer someone questioning God or the Gospel, and when I should refrain from engaging in the discussion?

9. When I consider Jesus' response to the delegation, how do I know if my own questions and struggles to understand His work in my life are sincere or if they are pretense to cover my own predetermined ideas and desires?
10. Are there any areas where the teaching and authority of Jesus threaten my own desires? Is the Spirit revealing anything to me that needs to submit to the Lordship of Christ?
11. Who can I reach out to this week to share the Good News of God's grace?