

Theme: 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.

I. Intro - The Climactic Battle

- A. An old literary device - the climactic battle
- B. Mark has delayed the battles in Jerusalem until now
- C. But as we will see this is just the continuation of the earlier battles in Galilee & a precursor of more to come

II. The Conflict Intensifies

- A. Jesus had produced amazement and opposition from the beginning of His ministry
 - 1. The people of Galilee were amazed at Jesus' teaching and actions - and this made the Pharisees and scribes there afraid and jealous!
They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²² **The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.** Mark 1:21-22
 - a. The people were amazed at Jesus teaching - as were the people in Jerusalem!
 - b. What was so distinct was the authority of His teaching!
 - c. His teaching and its authority were far greater than that of the scribes! How will they respond?
 - d. This is reiterated when He drives out demons!
The **people were all so amazed** that they asked each other, "What is this? A new **teaching** — and with **authority!** **He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him.**" Mark 1:27

- 1. People were amazed at His teaching, authority, and works!
 - 2. This is the beginning of a consistent pattern!
- 2. Soon leaders there questioned His authority to speak and act as He was - forgiving sins
"Why does this fellow talk like that? **He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?**" ... ¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has **authority** on earth to forgive sins. . . ." He said to the paralytic, Mark 2:7, 10
 - a. The scribes judged Jesus' words as blasphemous
 - b. Jesus indicated this was a question of authority
 - 3. Galilean leaders fought with Him about the Sabbath
The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" ... ²⁸ **So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.**" Mark 2:24, 28
 - a. The Pharisees in Galilee accused Him of letting His disciples break the Sabbath
 - b. Jesus claimed to have authority over the Sabbath!
Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath... ⁶ Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus. Mark 3:2, 6
 - c. The Pharisees were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus - would He heal on the Sabbath
 - d. When Jesus healed the man, they decided He must die!
 - 4. The people of Nazareth were amazed at Jesus' teaching and actions - but were offended by them!

When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and **many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles!"**³ Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" **And they took offense at him.** Mark 6:2-3

- a. The people were amazed at Jesus' teaching and His miracles - a consistent theme!
- b. But rather than embracing Jesus they were offended by Him - and this is a consistent theme as well!

B. The Sanhedrin delegation questions Jesus

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?" Mark 11:27-28

1. Jesus goes back to the Temple (every day)
 - a. The Temple is the spiritual center of Israel
 - b. The King is in His Temple and teaching
2. Chief priests, scribes, elders - Sanhedrin
 - a. The Sanhedrin was the ruling religious authority
 - b. It was comprised of these three groups
 - c. How will the leaders in Jerusalem respond to Jesus' teaching, actions, and authority? The same as the leaders in Galilee - they are not happy!
 - d. This is the highest authority in Judaism - this will be the climactic battle!
 - e. They are unhappy with Jesus' words and actions

- f. They question His authority to say & do these things
- g. They are also afraid of Jesus because the people love His teaching

The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, **for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.** Mark 11:18

- h. Mark is showing us the same issues - Jesus' teaching, actions, and authority - and the Sanhedrin has the same problems!

- C. 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.

III. Jesus and the Sanhedrin - The Battle Begins

- A. Jesus answers their question - with a question!

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!" Mark 11:29-30

 1. Answering a question with a question was a common rabbinic practice used to bring the whole issue into proper focus and explore the details
 2. Jesus has done this before!

Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"³ "What did Moses command you?" he replied. Mark 10:2-3

 - a. A question about divorce - answered with a question
 - b. Jesus used this to get to the real issue - God's intent and definition of marriage!
 3. He does the same thing here in Jerusalem

B. Question: what was the authority for John's baptism?
John's baptism — was it from heaven, or from men?
Tell me!" Mark 11:30

1. This question gets to the heart of the issue!
2. John and Jesus were linked from the beginning!
 - a. All of the Gospels intimately link the ministry of John and Jesus!
 - b. In every Gospel, John is the forerunner, the prophet who prepares the way for Jesus.
 - c. John claimed to be sent by God to prepare the way for the King Who was coming!
3. Was John's authority from God or did he act on his own? This is the same as the issue with Jesus!
4. This is a chance for the Sanhedrin to reflect and seek out the truth so they know how to respond!
5. What will they do?

C. The delegation's sad response

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.) Mark 11:31-32

1. They reason that if they say John was commissioned by God, then Jesus will ask why they rejected him!
2. They reason that if they say John had no authority from God they will be in trouble with the people who they are trying to keep on their side.
 - a. This is very telling: their authority is really from men!

b. Despite their show, they really fear people more than God!

3. Their reasoning is correct - and utterly insufficient!
4. Rather than seeking the truth and probing their own hearts, they only look at the question as a trap to be avoided!
5. Now is their chance to admit their error in opposing John, repent, and listen to Jesus - but they refuse!
The root of the trouble lay not in their intellect, but in their stubborn wills: they stood self-condemned. The question of Jesus to them was not a trap; it was yet another opportunity for them to realize and confess their blindness, and to ask for sight. Theirs was the unforgivable sin, that constant willful opposition and blindness that is the sin against the Holy Spirit (see Mark 3:29). (Alan Cole)
6. They refuse to answer - and are left on their own
So they answered Jesus, "We don't know." Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things." Mark 11:33
 - a. They will not honestly consider and answer Jesus' probing question, preferring to continue in their blindness.
 - b. Jesus will not answer a fool according to their folly for it serves no purpose (see Proverbs 26:4)
 - c. Jesus thus leaves them to their own prison, for no answer would suffice to change their mind.
 - d. *The Last Battle* - the dwarfs can't hear Aslan

IV. Applying the Word

A. Questioning Jesus?

1. The leaders have been questioning Jesus throughout the Gospel - and this will reach a fever pitch in the final week.
2. Their questioning is presented as faulty and wrong
3. It is ok for me to question Jesus about what is happening in my life and the world
 - a. The Psalms are full of questions to God - "Why is this happening?"; "Where are You?"; "Have you forgotten me?"
 - b. The Book of Job is a long story of one man wrestling with God and His questions!
 - c. Jesus asked if the cup could be removed, and cried out "Why have You forsaken Me?" on the cross!
4. God not only allows such questions - He encourages them!
 - a. When we don't understand what is happening in the world, we should go to God with our questions in prayer!
 - b. When our life is filled with pain, we should lament before God and lay our questions before Him!
 - c. Such questions are not a lack of faith but the substance of faith! Even though I don't understand I cling to God and talk with Him!
 - d. Is there any area like this in my life right now?
5. The problem was not the leaders' questions, it was the hard heart beneath the question
 - a. They did not ask out of faith, but out of severe skepticism - they refused to consider Jesus' claims.

- b. This was not a first-time issue - they had been solidly resisting Jesus & the Spirit for over 3 years!
 - c. Jesus had given them many signs and a lot of time, but rather than engaging in serious dialogue, they are merely looking for a way to accuse Him.
 - d. This was evidenced in their desire to see Jesus put to death!
6. The root problem - my will or God's will?
- a. The root problem was that Jesus' authority, Word, and actions threatened their religion!
 - b. They had to make a choice - and they decided Jesus must go!
 - c. Is there anything in my life that I value more than Jesus? A sin? Wealth? My plans? A relationship? My "freedom"?
 - d. Is the Spirit revealing any area that is hardening my heart to Jesus' authority, Word, and activity in my life?

B. The Lord's Table

1. Jesus is Lord over all - and has brought the new covenant!
2. The Table reminds us of His universal Lordship and continuing Presence with us
3. The Apostle's Creed

The Conflict Intensifies

Mark 11:27-33

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Communion

Ephesians 6:24

Teaching keywords: Christology; Kingdom of God; Tabernacle and Temple; Israel

Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love. Ephesians 6:24

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