

Crossroads Fellowship

“Who Died and Made You Messiah?”

Matthew 21:23-46

Introduction

Joke: Three buddies died in a car and went to heaven for an orientation. They are asked, "When you are in your casket and friends and family are mourning over you, what would you have liked them to say about you?"

1. The first guy said, "I would have liked to hear them say, 'I was a great doctor of my time, and a great family man.'"
2. The second guy said, "I would have liked to hear them say, 'I was a wonderful husband and school teacher who made a huge difference in the lives of many children.'"
3. The last guy said, "I would liked to hear them say, 'Look, he's moving!'"

Summary of events:

1. Jesus has concluded His Galilean and Perea ministry, crossed the Jordan River, entered Jericho, healed two blind men, one by the name of Bartimaeus, brought Zacchaeus into the Kingdom and traveled to Jerusalem for Passover.
2. Having arrived in the vicinity of Jerusalem, He stays in the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus that first Saturday night and then spent Sunday with the multitude who either followed Him or actually lived in Bethany.
3. On Monday, He sent His disciples to find the colt, which He rode triumphantly into the city of Jerusalem while the multitudes threw palm branches and clothing in His path and hailed Him, "Hosanna, blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord, the Son of David." Then, once again, He returned to Bethany to spend the night in the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus.
4. On Tuesday, He returned to Jerusalem and cleansed the temple – chasing out those who sold animal sacrifices and those who changed money. And by doing so, He infuriated the religious leaders who already despised Him and wanted Him dead. Then, once again, He returns to Bethany to spend the night with Mary, Martha and Lazarus.
5. On Wednesday, He curses the unfruitful fig tree and then proceeds on to the temple where He will spend the next 2 chapters of Matthew confronting the wickedness of Israel's spiritual leadership, which will end in His crucifixion.

I The Priests/Elders Challenge Jesus' Authority

A. The chief priests/elders **confronted** Him as He was teaching: [Verse 23]

Background: The priests were Sadducees and the elders were Pharisees.
These men were the powerful, influential and corrupt leadership of Israel.

They want to do one of two things:

1. They wanted to find grounds to discredit Him before the people.
2. They wanted to find a specific Roman or Jewish law by which they might accuse him of a capital crime – punishable by death!

1. By what **authority** are You doing these things?

Authority = Exousia = “Delegated jurisdiction or power”

The chief priests/elders had a very highly developed and sophisticated authority structure that Jesus virtually ignored. He never asked their permission for anything.

- a. He didn't ask them to approve His doctrine.
- b. He didn't ask them to approve His healings or casting out of demons.
- c. He didn't ask them to approve His verdicts and His judgments.
- d. He didn't ask them to approve His Messianic claims.
- e. He didn't ask them to approve His forgiving sins or granting eternal life.
- f. He sought no earthly approval, no earthly accreditation, no earthly ordination and no earthly credentials.

2. And who gave You this authority?

Jesus frequently stated that His authority came directly from God, His Father:

- a. John 7:16 “My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.”
 - b. John 12:49 “For I have not spoken on My own *authority*; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.”
- John 14:24 “He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.”

Note: Of course, they already knew this! But they wanted Him to say it again in the Temple during Passover, so that they could accuse Him of blasphemy and have biblical grounds to stone Him to death!

Application: As believers, we have been given divine authority, as well!

Matt 28:18-20 “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.”

B. Jesus answered by questioning the source John's authority [Verse 24-25a]

C. They reasoned among themselves, saying: [Verse 25b-27a]

Reasoned = Dialogizomai = "To reckon thoroughly or deliberate"

1. If we say, 'From **heaven**,' He will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?'
John 1:34 "And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."
2. But if we say, 'From **men**,' we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet"
Fear = Phobeo = "To frighten or alarmed"

Illustration: Saul making unauthorized sacrifice

1 Sam 15:24 "Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice."

Application: The fear of man can only be overcome by the fear of the Lord!

Prov 29:25 "The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe."

3. So they answered Jesus and said, "We do not know"

D. He said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what **authority** I do these things"
[Verse 27b]

II Jesus Challenges the Hearts of the Priests/Elders

A. The Parable of the Two Sons

Interpretation: The landowner is God the Father. The two sons are two followers of God. The vineyard is the sphere of the sons' ministry calling. The command to go is the Great Commission. The harvest is made up of souls.

1. A man had two sons, and he came them and said: [Verse 28-31a]

a. To son #1: Go, work today in my vineyard

1. He refused to work, but then later **agreed**

Changed his mind = Metamellomai = "To regret"

Repent = Metanoeo = "To think differently or reconsider"

b. To son #2: Go, work today in my vineyard

1. He agreed to work, but then later **refused**

This son feigns obedience, but refuses to abide by God's terms or obey His commands."

Note: Where is son #3 who agrees and obeys? Evidently, a rare breed!

c. Question: Which of the two did the will of his father?

The answer is obvious – the one who, in the end, did the will of the owner!

Application: The authenticating sign of sonship

John 14:21 “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”

1 John 2:3-4 “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

2. Logical conclusion and application: [Verse 31b-32]

a. **Sinners** enter the kingdom of God before you

Tax collectors and harlots were emblematic of the scum of society:

1. Tax collectors were treasonous, traitorous Jews who sold themselves to Rome to exact unfair taxes from the people.
2. Harlots were outcasts and symbolized the bottom of the barrel of sexual, God-defying immorality.

Summary: Religion doesn't get in you into the Kingdom. And sin repented of and forgiven doesn't keep you out. That's good news!

b. For John came to you in the way of **righteousness**:

Righteousness = Dikaioneme = “Justification”

1. You did not believe him

Believe = Pisteuo = “To take God at His Word”

Rom 1:16-17 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, *“The just shall live by faith.”*”

2. But tax collectors and harlots believed him

Illustration: The sinful woman who anointed Jesus feet with perfume in the home of a resistant and prideful Pharisee - Luke 7:37-50

3. And when you saw *it*, you did not afterward **relent** and **believe** him

Relent = Metamelomai = “To regret”

Observe the double indictment:

- a. They did not believe
- b. They did not relent

Application: Believe and repent!

Ezek 18:30-32 “Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways,” says the Lord GOD. “Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,” says the Lord GOD. “Therefore turn and live!”

B. The Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers (taken from Isaiah 5:1-7)

Interpretation: The landowner in the parable is God the Father. The son is the Messiah. The vineyard is Israel. The vinedressers are the Jewish leaders. The harvest is made up of souls. And the vintage-time is the End of the Age.

1. There was a certain landowner who **planted** a vineyard [Verse 33]
2. Now when vintage-time drew near: [Verse 34-39]
 - a. He sent his servants to receive its **fruit**
 - b. And the vinedressers beat one, killed one, stoned another and finally killed the **son**
Mark 12:6 tells us that this was the man’s “only son.”

Note the premeditated culpability of the vinedressers:

1. They knew that He was the Son!
2. They wanted His inheritance and were willing to steal it!
3. They planned the murder to gain control of what belonged to Him!

Dr. Fruchtenbaum's interpretation:

1. The one beaten: The pre-exilic prophets (pre-Babylonian exile).
2. The one killed; The post-exilic prophets.
3. The one stoned: John the Baptist and his disciples.

Note: Once again Jesus predicted His death at the hands of these men, which means that He was not a victim, but in absolute control of His destiny!

John 10:17-18 “Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”

3. Question: What will the owner do to those vinedressers? [Verse 40-41]
 - a. He will **destroy** them
 - b. He will **lease** his vineyard to other vinedressers

Illustration: Like King David who was livid at the story of Nathan the prophet (2 Sam 12:5) condemning David's sin of adultery, these Sadducees and Pharisees pronounce their own judgment!

4. Application and warning: [Verse 42-44]
 a. The rejected stone has become the chief **cornerstone**
Rejected = Apodokimazo = "To disapprove or repudiate"

Ps 118:22-23 "The stone *which* the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing; It *is* marvelous in our eyes."

The cornerstone is the most important foundation stone in a building:

1. It sets and determines the angles for the walls.
2. It establishes the plumb line for the uniformity of the building.
3. It is the keystone of structural support for the entire building.

Prophetically, this Cornerstone is none other than Jesus Christ!!

1. Peter preached in Acts 4:8-12 that Jesus "is the *'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'* Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."
2. He also wrote this in 1 Peter 2:4-8: "Coming to Him *as to* a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God *and* precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "*Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.*" Therefore, to you who believe, *He is* precious; but to those who are disobedient, "*The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,*" and "*A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.*" They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed."
3. Paul, Eph 2:19-22, said that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."

- b. The kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it

Possible interpretations:

1. The kingdom of God is taken from Israel and given to the church

Replacement Theology: The Christian Church has replaced National Israel as God's chosen people and that the Mosaic Covenant and all of the OT promises to Israel have been replaced or superseded by the New Covenant and the NT church.

2. The kingdom of God is taken from the Jewish leaders of that day to be re-offered to a future Jewish generation that will accept it.

Paul speaks of this prophetically in Rom 11:16-24:

- a. The native branches are Israel, but were broken off due to Israel's disobedience.
- b. Meanwhile, the Gentiles (wild branches) were grafted in.
- c. Eventually, the natural branches will be grafted back in.

What kind of fruit is God expecting? John the Baptist tells us in Mt 3:7:

1. Repentance from sin!
2. Embracing the gospel message by faith and baptism!
3. Walking in obedience to the truth of God's Word!

- c. Whoever falls on this stone will be **broken**. But on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder

This was a Messianic prophecy taken out of the text of Dan 2:34-35!

Israel's religious leaders were at a crossroads (and so are we!):

1. Be broken in humble surrender before God now.
 2. Be completely pulverized by Him in the coming judgment.
- Heb 3:7 "Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts!"

5. When the chief priests/Pharisees heard His parables: **[Verse 45-46]**
 - a. They perceived that He was speaking of them

Note: They knew He was talking about them!

1. They knew that they were ones who said, "Yes, we'll go," but then refused.
2. They knew they were the ones who conspired to steal the vineyard.
3. They knew they were the ones who beat, killed and stoned the prophets.
4. They knew they were prepared to kill the Son to get the inheritance!

Here's the heartbreak: Instead of responding to Jesus' convicting word ...

- b. They sought to **lay hands** on Him, but feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet

Lay hands on = Krateo = "To take or retain by force"

Feared = Phobeo = "To frighten or alarmed"

Application: This has always been the case with religious leaders who are confronted with their sin. They are faced with the choice to either:

1. Humble themselves – confessing and repenting of their sin!
2. Conspire together to silence and (if necessary) destroy God's messengers in order to steal the Son's inheritance!

Conclusion

The gospel bring everyone of us to a Crossroads

1. The crossroads of a King – Satan or God!
2. The crossroads of a kingdom – this world or the one to come!
3. The crossroads of citizenship – earthly or heavenly!