

Mark 11:27-33

INTRO:

When I was 20, I found myself in conflict with the local authorities back in Abilene TX.

My choice that night put me into direct conflict with the police officer.

I questioned his authority to tell me anything.

That attitude led to me being put into a chokehold and dropped to my knees!

I was handcuffed and taken to the county jail where I spent several hours waiting for Patty to come and bailed me out.

I learned a valuable lesson that day, I learned that we're all under some form of authority, and it's not good to question that authority.

Transition:

Today we will be in Mark chapter 11, where we see Jesus' authority being questioned.

Starting in verse 27...

²⁷ 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 of human origin? 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' ..." (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."

Body:

Jesus and his disciples have now come back to Jerusalem and the temple for the third time.

I want to remind you of what had happened earlier when He first came to the temple,...

...remember there was celebration and excitement—all eyes are on Jesus and His triumphal entry into the temple.

Then on the next day we see Him back at the temple and He's driving out the moneychangers.

And now, He's back in the temple for the third time...

You can bet everyone in the temple that day was aware of His presence.

I can imagine folks running around and telling everyone, "Hey, Jesus is back!"

He's wasn't hiding from or avoiding confrontation.

The crowds weren't the only ones looking for Jesus. The chief priest, the teachers and the elders were looking for Jesus, too.

They were a group of 70 men who were part of a ruling authority. They were known as the Sanhedrin. They were the high court of the Jewish people, their authority rested in the good graces of the people and the Roman officials.

Their position of authority was literally a balancing act between the two groups—they would do just enough to keep each group happy.

They'd seen what Jesus had done over the last few days—His triumphal entry and the turning over of the tables—as a direct challenge to their authority.

Oh they were outraged with Jesus. They had to shut Him down!

You can bet they weren't gonna let another incident like the ones that happened earlier take place.

They just wanted Him gone!

So they decide to direct a question to Jesus.

They asked Him, **"By what authority are you doing these things?" "And who gave you authority to do this?"**

They were essentially asking Jesus ***"what was the nature of His authority."***

They clearly anticipated Jesus' answer—they knew what He had said earlier.

They just needed Him to say it in front of the crowd and then they could seize Him for blasphemy!

But you know this is nothing new for Jesus, He's questioned by those in authority throughout His entire ministry...

They'd seen Him heal the sick, make the lame walk, and announce God's forgiveness.

You see, they're really not interested in the truth. They're just interested in maintaining the status

quo.

They're trying to provoke Jesus, so that they can turn the crowds against Him.

I think it's interesting—in their minds, they'd already formulated what they thought Jesus would say.

They thought they had a foolproof plan.

If Jesus claimed authority in Himself as the Son of God, they could accuse Him of blasphemy. If He claimed authority from men, they would just discredit Him.

But Jesus is too smart for their trickery—He knows their hearts, so He answers their question with a question!

He said, **“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 of human origin? Tell me!”**

Jesus did this a lot with those who were trying to trap Him.

It was a way of getting to the truth of the persons question.

Jesus wasn't trying to be rude or slick in His response.

His response was a common debating technique for His day.

Jesus asked them a pretty straightforward question: basically Jesus is asking them, ***“Do you think God was behind John's mission or not?”***

Jesus' question dealt directly with their rejection of John the Baptist.

It's interesting to note that Jesus isn't refusing to answer the question; He's willing to answer it.

If they'd be open with Him, then He'd be open with them, He'd answer their question.

But that wasn't to be the case.

Jesus' question throws them back on their heels!

Mark tells us...

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’ ...” (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.)

The leaders now find themselves in a tight spot.

They understood the question.

...They knew that if they said, “*John’s ministry was divinely appointed,*” then they should have obeyed John’s call to repent.

And at a deeper level, it would mean they would be compelled to believe in Jesus, because of what John had said about Jesus.

They knew that the people viewed John as a true prophet, to deny John, would mean that they could be stoned for blasphemy!

Jesus’ question ends up being too much for them.

So to save face, they plead ignorance...

...and say those three dreaded words we all hate to say at times, “**We don’t know.**”

Imagine how hard that was for them to say.

But the truth is they did know—they just refused to answer the question.

They really weren’t seeking the truth. They were more concerned with their reputations and maintaining their power.

So Jesus simply puts an end to the debate by saying, “**Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.**”

Jesus’ final reply is a refusal to answer their question—at least directly—He had given them a veiled answer in His counter question.

If only they had eyes to see, they could have seen it, had they looked honestly at His question.

Conclusion:

So the question turns to us.

Are we willing to look honestly at the authority of Jesus? What does that mean for our lives?

What is authority? It’s the power or right to give orders, make decisions and enforce obedience.

There are different levels of authority and we’re all under some kind of authority.

Think about all the different forms of authority that have bearing in your life...

...worldviews, culture, religion, the workplace, governmental agencies and so many others...

The question of authority really is a fundamental issue that faces every person.

While we're here on earth, every one of us will have an authority that we submit to as a subordinate. It's true.

But ultimately there is one supreme authority—for the Christian that authority is found in Jesus.

Jesus said, **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me”**

The gospels are a testimony to the truth of His authority.

So think about that for a moment: **“All”** means the whole extent of authority—every individual component of it—it's all been given to Jesus.

About 20 years ago I was introduced to this concept of positional and relational authority.

Positional authority is the kind of authority that comes from title, rank and status. It's the authority you get solely from the position held.

For example: when I was a senior noncommissioned officer, I could walk into a room filled with airmen and they'd all stand up the moment I entered the room.

They had a respect for my rank and my position.

But the truth is, they may or may not have respected me personally, they didn't know me, they only recognized my position.

The sad thing is, if you only have this kind of authority, most of the time it ends up just being painful for those under the authority.

Then there is relational authority. It's the authority that comes from the trust and respect of others.

Here's the interesting thing about this kind of authority: it can't be demanded.

It's given freely by the followers regardless of the position of the person.

It's based on one's character, not a position. It's given to a person because people trust them enough to follow them.

You've seen this kind of person—you may even be this kind of a person.

This person is the one that everyone goes to; the kind of person that has earned authority in the lives of others, even though they haven't been given a position of authority.

But as good as it sounds; this kind of authority has its limitations as well...

It can be frustrating because you feel powerless; you have no real positional authority to change anything.

To just have one or the other type of authority—positional or relational—is to be limited in your authority.

I was taught the best type of authority is found in those who can operate with high levels of both types authority!

They're the ones that people would give their all to follow.

I want you to let that sink in—positional and relational authority.

Now I can hear some of you saying, "Okay Jim—what is your point?"

My point is that **"all authority on heaven and earth has been given to Jesus"**

He is Supreme—both in positional authority and relational authority.

His authority surpasses all other authorities!

In His positional authority He has no equal...

...He is seated at the right hand of God, every knee will bow before Him, and every tongue will confess Him as Lord.

**"...he was taken up into heaven and sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand."
Mark 16:9 "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.'" Romans 14:11**

He is supreme in His relational authority...

He wants to have fellowship with you. He stands at the door of our hearts! He wants to give us rest—rest in Him! **Rev 3.20, Matt.11.28 John15:5**

His supremacy is the Gospel—and this is Good News for you and me!

So think about the **implications of Jesus' authority in our own lives—what's it mean?**

It means that we can **trust Him**. It means that He is our **final authority on every aspect of our lives**.

More importantly, the question of Jesus' Authority means that at some point each one of us—all of humanity—will have to give an answer.

We can't straddle the fence—the question demands an answer.

Either Jesus is or isn't who He said He is. We have to decide.

Application:

The application today is really for two types of people.

First is to the person who doesn't know who Jesus is: you don't know Him personally.

Maybe you're on the fence and not sure if you can trust Him.

Well then I'd challenge you to wrestle with the question of who Jesus is.

Spend some time with Him.

Let Him know your concerns, your fears, your confusion and whatever questions and doubts you've got.

Wrestle with Him...

If you don't know how to do this or even what I mean—grab someone who knows Jesus and ask them to help you find out more about Him.

In large part, it's going to come by spending time with believers and by spending time with Jesus in His word.

As you learn about Him, don't be afraid to ask Him questions, talk to Him about what you don't understand.

He's big enough to handle it. He just wants you to be honest with Him.

What he doesn't want is for you to be like the leaders who came to Him that day.

They weren't ready to be honest with Him.

So Jesus was done talking with them. There was no need in talking anymore until they were willing to be honest with their questions.

The second application is to those who have already trusted Jesus.

Most of us in this room have settled the question of Jesus' authority—we believe He's our Lord and Savior. We've nailed that down.

So what do we do?

Well, we continue to spend time with Jesus, with the Master!

We continue to develop a strong relationship with Him.

A relationship that is built on trust, built on His supreme positional and relational authority.

It's an absolutely essential condition!

Spend time in the Gospels—get to know Jesus on a deeper level.

Develop your prayer life—have a conversational-style relationship—be honest with Him. Let Him know your struggles and your desires—tell Him what's on your heart.

This is how a relationship is built; this is how trust is developed.

It's what we do with our closest friend, so why should we expect it to be any different with Jesus.

Now for some of you, this may come naturally, in fact it may be just a natural response that flows out of the core of your very being.

If that's you I'm glad—keep it up!

And yet for others, what I'm saying may sound like a beat down.

You might be thinking, ***“I'm doing this already Jim, but it's hard, a lot harder than you make it sound.”***

“Jim, you're making this out to be so simple.”

And I'd say, “I am, it is simple, but I never said it was easy.”

It is hard! It takes discipline, it takes effort.

This is where you've got to wrestle with God.

Some around us today would have us think that our new life with Christ immunizes us from struggle and difficulty, but that's just not true.

Just because you've become a follower of Christ doesn't mean your struggles are over—far from it.

If you're struggling, don't think something is wrong with you. Even one of the greatest prophets Elisha struggled.

The key for when we're struggling is that we've got to ask Jesus to help us, and then we've got to dig down deep, all the time depending on Him.

And together with God, search for answers to your struggles.

This is going to look different for each one of us, but that doesn't mean we can't do it.

Sometimes I think we make the mistake of thinking somehow there's got to be an expert out there who can give me the "*three easy steps*" to figuring out my situation.

You know what I'm talking about: "*Five steps to the perfect walk with Jesus!*" Do these, and all will be well!

No. It doesn't work that way. Walking with Jesus is more of an art that is *better caught* than *taught*.

That's how most of the deepest things of life, like love, marriage, commitment and such, are learned; they're learned through experience.

Guinness says, "*With the deepest things in life, there is always more to know than knowing will ever know, so the deepest knowledge must be learned in life, from experience, and under a master.*"

I think this is true for the believer in their walk with Jesus.

For the believer, the Master is Jesus. Let Him teach you how to walk with Him.

I don't know what you're struggling with, but I can tell you what I do know.

"There is only one who has *all authority in heaven and earth*, He is willing to help you, to rescue you, from all your troubles and struggles."

He's the one our focus should be on—it's Jesus!

He is "*...the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*" *Heb. 12.2*

Remember that Hebrews tells us our "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." *Heb.11*

Jesus is a firm foundation for us to stand on.

How do we do it when we're struggling?

There is no magic bullet—*we just simply ask Jesus to help us! We pour our hearts out to Jesus.*

We wholeheartedly and repeatedly tell Jesus how much we desire to see Him more fully, to know Him more completely.

Don't let my saying this discourage you—stay with me.

Don't let discouragement flood over you so that you miss what I'm saying.

Listen to one of my favorite quotes from Willard about living under Christ authority, he said:

“The rule of the kingdom is to ask. We ask to see Him, and not just as he is represented in the Gospels, but also as he has lived and lives through history and now, and in his reality as the one who literally holds the universe in existence. He will certainly be aware of our request, just as you would be aware of anyone expressing their desires to you in your house.”

Because of Jesus' authority, we can have this kind of relationship with Him.

I challenge you to continue to set aside time throughout your day to be with Jesus.

It's not some mystical type of event—it's simply spending time with Him as you would a friend.

Just make sure you're being intentional and persistently pursuing Jesus.

He is the King! The one in whom all authority in heaven and earth resides...

...You make it your goal ***to develop a heart*** that has been transformed through effort, and the grace of God, ***to be like Jesus' heart.***

Stay focused on the Lord; seek to look beyond your struggles through the eyes of faith.

Hebrews chapter 11 is a great reminder of what this looks like.

And by faith, we continue to do the things God has called us to do like pray, trust, work, serve, love, invest in people, and all along the way we keep our eyes on Jesus.

You trust Jesus and His gospel and move out confidently into the world He's called you to.

Always trusting in him, you challenge the darkness with the hope of Christian faith, believing in a victory that is beyond we can see and accomplish today.

Then you let that love of God overflow into the lives of those around you.

That's how we follow Jesus—even when we're struggling, that's how we live under His authority!

Let's pray.

SMALL GROUP NOTES
Oct 4, 2015 **Mark 11:27-33**

Jim's sermon really is a reflection on authority. While we're on this earth we will be under some form of authority. To enter into a discussion on authority is to enter deep waters! There are many types of authority, but Jim focused on the aspect of positional and relational authority. One thing is for sure: all the different types of authority we encounter while on this earth will have their limitations. Think about it for a moment: even within the passage we see different types of authority and their limitations. Take the Sanhedrin. They were the supreme authority for the Jewish people, yet they were limited by their popularity with the very people they were to lead. Lose favor with the people and they'd lose their position of authority. Who really had the position of authority: the people or the leaders? It's an interesting question, isn't it?

Today we live in a more secularized culture. The authority of Jesus and Bible is questioned and even rejected by culture. Many today see the Bible as a book full of myths and fables, not as an authoritative book, a book with answers to the meaning/purpose of life. In fact, over the last century, modern people have become more convinced that "we are our own authority." "If it feels good and doesn't affect anyone else, then just do it." "I'm the captain of my own ship." These are just a few mantras commonly heard today. But if one looks honestly at these philosophies, they quickly find their failures and shortcomings. But what do we really have authority over? It is true we do have some authority, but again, it is limited.

Read the following definitions of authority:

1. The power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience: "He had absolute authority over his subordinates."
2. A person or organization having power or control in a particular, typically political or administrative, sphere: "The health authorities."
3. The power to influence others, especially because of one's commanding manner or one's recognized knowledge about something: "He has the natural authority of one who is used to being obeyed."

Reflect on how these types of authorities affect your life. Who has power to give you orders? What organizations have control over you? How much control? Who or what has authority to influence you? What are the positives? What are the negatives? What are the limitations, if any?

It doesn't take long to see that there are limitations to these types of authorities. No matter how important they may seem, they all fall short, even if that authority has the title of "supreme leader" like Ali Khamenei of Iran. "Supreme" means "superior to all other." It's obvious that Ali Khamenei's leadership is limited to his sphere of influence; it has no authority here in the U.S. My point is all of these types of authority are limited in their scope. That doesn't mean that forms of authority are bad; far from it. We need authorities if societies are to function, but there is a limit to their authority.

However there is a “supreme authority” and it is Jesus. The Bible tells us that Jesus said, **“All Authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”**

When you think about the word “all” in the context of Jesus’ statement, what is He talking about? Think about it in terms of the different types of authority. Does it encourage you?

Jim talked about positional and relational authority, and how Jesus was supreme in both. Think about this: what does it mean for you and your walk with Jesus?

How might contemplating Jesus’ supreme authority help you in your struggles?

What were some practical things Jim suggested you do when struggling in your walk with Jesus?

How can reading Hebrews Chapter 11 be an encouragement to someone who is struggling in their walk with Jesus? How does the authority of Jesus fit within Hebrews 11?

THE GOSPEL OF

MARK



**“FOR EVEN THE
SON OF MAN
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MARK 10:45

J. STILL

Mark 11:27-33

²⁷ 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 of human origin? 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’ ...” (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.”

Jerusalem Temple



Jesus' Triumphal Entry



Jesus Clearing the Temple Court



Jesus is Back in the Temple for the Third Time



**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 of human origin? Tell me!”

“Do you think God was behind John’s mission or not?”

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**Are we willing to look honestly at the authority of
Jesus? What does that mean for our lives?**

**“All authority in heaven and on earth
has been given to me”**

Matt 28:18

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So what's your point?

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**“all authority on heaven and earth has
been given to Jesus” Matt. 28:18**

**Jesus' authority surpasses all other
authorities!**

He alone is Supreme

Positional:

...he was taken up into heaven and sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand.”

Mark 16:9

‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.’

Romans 14:11

Relational:

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

Rev. 3:20

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Matt. 11:28

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

John 15:5

Jesus' authority in our lives—what's it mean?

We can trust Him.

He is our final authority.

You know your purpose.

No straddling the fence—the question demands an answer.

Either Jesus is or isn't who He said He is. We have to decide.

Application

Decide—is Jesus who he said he was?

If you don't know, wrestle with the question

Ask someone who knows Jesus to help you

Talk to Jesus—Be honest with him

Already know Jesus?

Continue to spend time with the Master

Continue to develop a strong relationship
with Jesus.

Continue to spend time in His Word

Continue to Pray

“I’m doing this already Jim, but it’s hard, a lot harder than you make it sound.”

“Jim, you’re making this out to be so simple.”

It is simple, but it is not easy!
It's hard—it takes discipline and effort.

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My Challenge to You

Continue to set aside time to be with Jesus.

Be intentional and persistent in pursuing Jesus.

Transform your heart through effort to be like Jesus.

Continue to do the things God has called you to.

Trust--Let the love of God overflow into those around you.