

Confronting Christ

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- [0 : 00] Now, we are continuing our journey through the Gospel of Luke. Now, Jesus had just ridden into Jerusalem, hailed as king.
- He chased out the merchants from the temple courts, declaring that the temple has been turned into a den of robbers and that he was turning it back into a house of prayer.
- He then starts preaching and proclaiming the Gospel in the temple courts itself. His audience paid rapt attention to his words, but a group of powerful men wants him dead.
- How will this clash of authority play out? Now, before, let's pray and ask God for his help as we gather around his word. Dear Father, speak to us from your word.
- Show us Christ. Help me as I yield myself to you to use. Move our hearts towards trust and obedience.
- [1 : 19] For we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son whom you love. Amen. Please keep your Bibles open to Luke 20, and you should have received an outline of today's sermon as well.
- Until now, the religious leaders in Jerusalem were rather unconcerned with the news they heard about a travelling preacher and his seemingly outrageous claims and actions.
- Ah, that all seems so far away from Jerusalem. But this week, in their time of course, they were greatly disturbed.
- Jesus was exerting his authority on their turf. The Jerusalem council, called the Sanhedrin, was headed by the high priests and consisted of the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the city elders, those people mentioned, who will confront Jesus.
- And for centuries, this Sanhedrin had been the religious, civil, and judiciary authority over Israel for hundreds of years.
- [2 : 40] The market at the temple courts was their idea. And this Jesus, who had never sat under a rabbi, with no official training, no credentials, from Galilee of all places, and from a family of nobodies, was to them just a blasphemer who desecrated the temple with his nonsense.
- The people were in for a showdown at the temple. Now, some representatives of the Sanhedrin were ready to confront Jesus.
- What authority did Jesus have to ride into Jerusalem like a king? Or to empty the temple courts of merchants? Or to teach? What right did he have?
- In their eyes, he had no rights. Yes. What gives Jesus the right to your life?
- In church, we hear phrases like, Jesus is king. Jesus is lord. Are they simply slogans to agree to? Does Jesus have the right to your reverence?
- [4 : 04] Does he have your reverence? Does he have the right to tell you how to run your life? To tell you what is right and what is wrong?
- To call you to repent and to change? Does he? Is he the authority in your life? Or are you the ultimate authority to decide which part of Jesus' teaching to follow and which to ignore?

In the passage today, Jesus will make it clear who he is and why you and I must let him be the ultimate authority in our lives.

Our decision either way will have eternal consequences. We need to get Jesus' identity right and to respond to him appropriately.

Let's go to verse 1. One day as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple courts and proclaiming the good news, the chief priests and the teachers of the law together with the elders came up to him.

[5 : 16] Tell us, by what authority you are doing these things? Who gave you this authority? Now, Diaz was not a sincere inquiry.

They just wanted to point out to Jesus' audience that they did not, that he did not have the necessary academic credentials or rabbinic training and that the Sanhedrin themselves, they have definitely not authorised him to teach or to exert power over the running of the temple.

Their aim was to expose Jesus as a fraud and to shame him before the people. Knowing their intentions and knowing, yes, true, he really did not derive his authority from any earthly or human origin, Jesus doesn't answer their question directly.

He gives them a counter-question which was actually aimed to get them to come to their own conclusions and to acknowledge the source of his authority.

He points them to John the Baptist. He said, verse 3, I will ask you a question. Tell me, John's baptism, was it from heaven or of human origin?

[6 : 42] In Matthew 11, Jesus had already declared John the Baptist a prophet. In fact, he was more than a prophet in the sense that he is the fulfilment of the prophecy of Malachi 3, which we just read in our call to worship.

We read that he is the messenger who will prepare the way for the appearance of who? The Lord. And when he has done so, what's going to happen?

The Lord whom the Israelites were seeking will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant whom they desire will come.

What was John's testimony? In Luke 3, 4-6, of himself he says, I am the voice calling in the wilderness, prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him, and all the people will see God's salvation.

Of Jesus, he said this, in John 1, 29-34, Luke, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[8 : 03] this is the one I meant when I said, a man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me. I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.

And he said, I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. Now, I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, the man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who were baptized with the Holy Spirit.

I have seen and I testify this is God's chosen one. John's baptism had another greater, even greater significance for Jesus as to the origin of his authority.

Luke 3, 21-22, the account of the baptism. When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too.

And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice from heaven said, You are my son whom I love.

[9 : 30] With you I am well pleased. It was then when Jesus received God the Father's confirmation of his identity as his son.

So his authority lies in the fact that he is God's son with the divine authority to act and speak for God himself.

Now, if the leaders answered the question truthfully that John's baptism is from heaven, then they will know Jesus' source of authority, that he is God's beloved son, his chosen one, the Messiah, their long awaited king.

His authority is therefore intrinsic to who he was. He simply had authority authority in himself, which means also that his authority would be over the Sanhedrin and over even the temple.

And fulfilling Malachi's prophecy, didn't he suddenly come to his temple and is bringing the message of the covenant?

[10 : 50] So in verse 5, they discuss it among themselves, the Jesus question, so they discuss it among themselves. But you notice that how they were discussing, the members of the Sanhedrin were not interested in the truth.

They had already dismissed John's baptism as not from God. They have already decided long before. They have also decided that Jesus was a fraud. This holy huddle was not to review their decision.

Nope. It was just to decide on the best answer for the best outcome for them. Their concern was the optics and they were going to control the spin.

So you see in verse 5, listen in on their discussion, if we say from heaven, he will ask, why didn't you believe him? But if we say from human origin, all the people will stone us because they are persuaded that John was a prophet.

It was a no-win situation. So they claim, ignorance, we don't know, we don't know, we don't know, where it came from.

[12 : 20] Cowards, liars. It was not ignorance, but rather cowardice, insincerity, and hypocrisy that shaped their reply.

Faced with such people, Jesus said, neither will I tell you by what authority I'm doing these things. there was no point reasoning with insincere and hypocritical people who are guided by self-interest rather than by the truth.

But Jesus was not finished. He would show them up for who they are. He tells them a parable to show them that this rejection of God's authority is something the nation has been doing since the time Israel was established.

And yes, they will also succeed in murdering him as they had planned. But that will prove disastrous for the nation. Jesus tells them this parable, verses 9 to 16.

Now, even the common people would immediately understand that Jesus was telling them their historical relationship with God. This is shown in their reaction in verse 16.

[13 : 44] God forbid! It will never happen! And verse 19, Luke tells us that the leaders knew he had spoken the parable against them. This parable was a tindy, veiled, historical recount of Israel's history.

In Isaiah 5, 1 to 7, is a section called the Song of the Vineyard. And it says this, God has planted a vineyard and cared for it.

And the vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the nation of Israel. And the people of Judah are the vines he delights in. And so in the story, a man planted a vineyard.

And God planted the nation of Israel. Israel. And then he rented out to some farmers and went away for a long time. God puts leaders in Israel to care for the people.

So these are the farmers in the story. They were the leaders of Israel. And God expected, even in his absence, a harvest of fruit of righteousness from his people.

[15 : 05] In the story, the owner sends a servant to get fruit. from the vineyard. Verse 10, At the harvest time, he sent a servant to the tenants, so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard.

Now this servant represented a prophet, whom God sent to Israel. But the tenants, the leaders, beat him and sent him away empty-handed, showing up the leaders contempt for God himself.

But God did not give up expecting a return of good fruit from his people. In verses 11 to 12, he would send prophet after prophet to try to turn the nation back to himself.

Verse 11 says, He sent another servant, but that also they bit and treated shamefully, and sent away empty-handed. He sent still a third, and this one even worse, they would wound him and throw him out.

This is how Israel treated God's prophet. They were rejected and abused. Elijah was driven into the wilderness.

[16 : 24] According to traditions, Isaiah was sown in two. Zechariah was stoned to death. John the Baptist was beheaded.

By now, you would have expected the owner to get the police and evict the tenant farmers and rent the vineyard to others. But no, not yet.

The owner asked himself, what shall I do? What a twist to the story. no, he doesn't send another prophet as the people would expect.

He says, verse 13, I will send my son, whom I love. Perhaps they will respect him.

What a twist. What a patient, compassionate and merciful God. Now, where did we come across the word, my son, whom I love?

[17 : 39] Yes, that's right. The exact words God used for Jesus at his baptism. Jesus couldn't be clearer. That's me.

I'm here now. God has sent his son to you. him. This parable has shifted from past events to the present.

But let it be clear. The prophets sent earlier were servants. Jesus is not a servant or even the most favourite servant.

No, he is the son. son. He is not just a prophet. As son, he is the heir to the vineyard.

In fact, he owns the whole universe with his father. He has come to possess what is rightfully his.

[18 : 44] Jesus comes to his own. But will they receive him? Will they respect his authority?

No, they won't. And it was not a case of ignorance. It was not a case of mistaken identity. As if they didn't recognise the son.

They knew he was the son. Look at verse 14. This is the heir. Let's kill him and the inheritance will be ours.

So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. And that's what the Sanhedrin would do. A few days later, they would take him out of Jerusalem and crucify him.

crucify him. the leadership of Israel would go as far as murder to cling to their authority over the temple and Jerusalem.

[19 : 55] It did not surprise Jesus. Jesus had spoken of this way before his arrival to Jerusalem. All the way back in Luke 9, said, the son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed.

And on the third day, he will rise to life. Wait, as the son of God, why would he allow himself to be rejected and killed?

Doesn't he have the power to call upon the armies of heaven to protect him? But he would not do that because he came to give his life away.

God's redemption plan depended on Jesus giving his life as the atoning sacrifice. He was the only perfect and blameless man able to die in our place to take away our sin and receive our punishment on our behalf.

He came to give his life as a ransom for us, to pay for our forgiveness, cleansing, redemption, and reconciliation with God.

[21 : 22] He came to usher in the new covenant between God and man. God will do to the Jewish leaders for rejecting his son and for their part in murdering him?

Verse 16, he will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. What?

The vineyard will be given to others? To Gentiles? God forbid. The people were aghast, horrified at the judgment pronounced.

Rejecting the son was certainly foolish. They thought they were okay, they were secure. Come on, they were the chosen people.

They had the Torah, they had the temple. Never in their wildest nightmare would they believe that God's favour will be taken away from them and given to others.

[22 : 32] Alas, they did not recognise that God was doing a new thing. God was calling them to have faith in his son. The old way of the temple worship was obsolete and passing away.

And we find in the next chapter that Jesus would later prophesy of the destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem. There will be a repeat of history when God judges his people after his people repeatedly refuse to respond to his compassion by rejecting his prophets and then his son.

In the past, God used Assyria and Babylon to punish his people. In AD 70, about 30 to 40 years later, God would use the Romans to lay waste Jerusalem and destroy the temple.

people. And yet, God's kingdom will grow as Gentiles responded positively to the preaching of the gospel. Rejecting Jesus and his authority is also futile.

Why? Because he and he alone is God's choice. There is no other, and the consequence of rejecting him has eternal ramification.

[24 : 03] Verse, after the people say, God forbid, this will not happen, Jesus looks directly at them in verse 17 and said, Then, what is the meaning of that which is written?

Verse 17, yeah? The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces.

Everyone on whom it falls will be crushed. What are cornerstones? Cornerstones were very important in the construction of stone buildings in the ancient days.

They are the first stone to be laid in the construction of the foundation. They are placed in the corners where two walls will finally meet.

And so they determine the orientation and the shape of the entire building. So picture now, will you, a group of builders. They are looking over some stones to decide which one to use as a cornerstone.

[25 : 16] So they rejected those they thought not suitable. No, no, no. no. And along comes the chief mason to the pile of rejected stone and say, hey, hey, hey, wait a minute.

This stone you rejected has the perfect shape and size for the cornerstone. The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

That was taken from Psalm 118 verse 22. In that Psalm, the king whom the leaders rejected turned out to be the person of God's choice.

Jesus is saying, look, that's who he is. He is the stone the leaders have rejected. But God says, no, he is the cornerstone for the house I will be building.

king. He is God's choice. In the words of John the Baptist, the chosen one. Man can reject and even kill him, but God will not let that be the last word.

[26 : 36] He will be raised from the dead as the cornerstone with which God will build his new eternal kingdom. What is the implication of Jesus being the cornerstone?

For one, he is God's only choice. God has not chosen anyone else to stand equal to him. Hear the words of Jesus in John 14 6.

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Matthew 11 27.

All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Apostle Peter says in Acts 4. 11-12, Jesus is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.

[27 : 46] Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no one under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. There's no alternative, no second man, not in China, not in Zambia, not in Congo, not in Russia, not in the US, not in Iran, not in Malaysia.

The way to God is exclusively in the hands of one man, Jesus, God's chosen one.

He is Lord of all. Being the cornerstone means that he is the essential, perfect, and true foundation to build our faith upon.

He is the cornerstone of our salvation, without which no one can be redeemed and be reconciled to God. Without him, we cannot enter God's kingdom. But he is also the cornerstone that stabilises our life, who holds us steady when our life or even our faith is shaken.

And he is the cornerstone upon which the church is built up into a holy spiritual temple where God lives by his spirit.

[29 : 20] But note in verse 18, Jesus being the cornerstone also means he is the stone of judgment. Verse 18 says, everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces.

Everyone on whom it falls will be crushed. Everyone will be judged according to what they do with Jesus, the cornerstone.

1 Peter chapter 2, 7 to 8, Peter tells us that for those of us who believe, the cornerstone is very precious.

But for those who do not believe, that stone becomes for them a stone that causes them to stumble and fall. So for those who reject the cornerstone that is fall against it, they will be broken to pieces.

And if the stone falls on them in judgment, they will be crushed. So, will you embrace him?

[30 : 37] Believe him? Let your sin be replaced by his holiness and be saved from the coming wrath? Or will we reject his offer of forgiveness of sin and so remain condemned?

The writer to the letter to the Hebrews asks, how will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? We will not.

If we are not hidden in the cornerstone but stand in opposition to him, we will be crushed by it and broken to pieces on the day he comes again in judgment.

is Jesus your rock of salvation now? Or will he be the rock of judgment when he comes again? Now, if you have heard and understood the gospel but you are hesitant to take the next step to put your trust in Jesus, perhaps, like the leaders who confronted Jesus in the temple, you are worried about the reactions of people around you.

Perhaps, they are your parents or your spouse or you are fearful of the consequence of making a commitment to follow Jesus.

[32 : 02] You know that your life will change and you rather it did not. But, but think of what you may be losing out on.

Peace with God, a secure place in his family, sins all forgiven and forgotten forever. Your life hidden safe in the chief cornerstone, your future secure in him and you will have a place in the coming new world that does not end.

If you are already a believer today, perhaps the question you need to ask is this. Is your life showing that you are yielding more and more of it under the authority of Christ?

God is he truly your king? Are you listening to him speak to you by his word? Are there areas in your life you have told him to keep out?

heart? Remember that the king who calls for your obedience is the benevolent king who has given his life so that all your sins remain forever and completely forgiven and forgotten and you made righteous in him.

[33 : 34] He is the cornerstone who keeps you secure himself. So let us joyfully submit to him. in humility and gratitude.

Now let's pause here for a minute and let's go to the Lord. Individually, is there something the Spirit is saying to you about your standing with God, with Jesus?

Now I'll give you a moment for you to just reach out to him in prayer.