

21:16

And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? So the scribes and the chief priests are saying, “Jesus, you need to correct them, because they are way out of line here.”

And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read.... Think about it, now. Who is he talking to? That is all they do is read the Old Testament. The scribe’s job is to copy it verbatim, line by line, letter by letter. Haven’t you read... have you ever read Psalm 8:2?” Jesus asks these folks this question six times in Matthew.

“Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?” Why is he quoting out of Psalm 8:2? Jesus is talking to a crowd who mistook biblical literacy for a regenerate lifestyle.

By the way, Jesus authoritatively quoted a translation. It is not the Hebrew.

Moreover, this single line out of a poem was authoritative in the instruction of the character of God. Probably, David wrote this about himself being the youngest of many brothers, but we also find the timeless truth that God’s character is reflected in choosing the mouths of children to stifle the enemy. By the way, with the address of Jehovah in Psalm 8:1, this is an overt statement of Jesus declaring His worthiness of receiving worship as Jehovah—or at least, in the place of Jehovah. Away with the ridiculous notion that Jesus did not feel as though He was God.

Also, Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy in chapter 4; Genesis in chapter 19; Psalms here; Hosea in chapter 9; Micah in chapter 10; Malachi in chapter 11; Numbers, 1 Samuel, 1 Kings, and Jonah in chapter 12; Isaiah in chapter 13; Jeremiah in chapter 21; Exodus in chapter 22; 2 Chronicles in chapter 23; Daniel in chapter 24; Joel and Zechariah in chapter 25. The 39 books of the O.T. were in 22 books in the original Old Testament and Jesus quotes from 17 of those 22 books just in Matthew...all of this without proper “authority” or teaching (21:23). He demonstrates here that there was no “canon within a canon” or superior genre. Rather, He quotes the Psalms here as a way of showing that Psalms is just as authoritative as Genesis or any other book. He also had no issues saying they were about Him. We are expected to read the Psalms and believe them on that same level.

In other words, the reason you don’t think Jesus deserves your worship is because you don’t think He has that much authority. With a culture that has a great cause for why we shouldn’t have to obey the authority God places over us. The answer to their question of “authority” (21:23) should have provided their motivation to worship this same Jesus.

thou hast perfected praise? So what kind of **praise** does God **perfect**? Or, to take it from the Hebrew in Psalm 8:2...what does God ordain as the **praise** to Himself:

1. Audible: Jesus said it was right. This is not an issue of personality; it’s an issue of obedience. Jesus would have never said “Sssshhhh, we’re in church!”
2. Visible: They are waving palm branches. God did not **perfect** the kind of **praise** that keeps the hands in the pockets.
3. Sacrificial: They could have been doing other things. They furthermore sacrificed their self-respect. Were children feeling weird acting this way? Maybe. Revelation 4 has men who cast their crowns before God’s throne, and we find these crowns are emblematic of all that was behind the achievement of them and all the accolades from them.

4. Emotional: God **perfected praise** that caused people to act like there was a party going on in the streets of that city.
5. Thoughtful: Somehow, these children knew Psalm 118. Who taught them this? They were saying things they were taught. They were using Scriptural lyrics? How thoughtful!
6. Inconvenient: People took time out to expend energy in this act of **praise**.
7. Unsettling: Mostly everybody around was uncomfortable. “Don’t you hear them?! Shut their mouths” (21:15)! Jesus provoked all of this. It’s not every day that somebody claiming to be the Son of God comes presenting Himself as King.

And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there. We are down at the last approach to Jerusalem for Jesus. He goes through Bethany and Bethpage at the beginning of this story. You see that in verse one. Bethany is about two or three miles from the town of Jerusalem. He came down the road from Bethany into the eastern gate, into the temple.

21:17

Then He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and He lodged there.

21:18-19

Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. 19 And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, “Let no fruit grow on you ever again.” Immediately the fig tree withered away. Some have thought about **the fig tree** as being ethnic Israel. However, one might consider that this was the only “fruit tree” on the path from Bethany to Jerusalem over the Mount of Olives and that this **fig tree**, although often picturing ethnic Israel, need not be so in this context. If this were Israel, Jeremiah 33:25-26 and Romans 11 would make no sense for Israel would **never grow fruit again**. So, this cannot be Israel, for they indeed do **grow fruit again**.

21:20

And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, “How did the fig tree wither away so soon?” but only that **tree**.

21:21-22

So Jesus answered and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, is Mount of Olives. Matthew 6 is the prayer that will bring the Zechariah 14 fulfillment of this very literal, end-times prayer. ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done. 22 And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, the Scripture of Zechariah 14, that is. You have no business claiming this promise if you don’t have a Scripture promise upon which to base your prayers. you will receive.”

21:23

Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?” This is not the *dunamis* but the *exousia*, or “authorization” **authority**. This is the same word used by the centurion in chapter 8:5 and following and the same word Jesus uses in 10:1 when sending out his disciples to the Jews (10:5-

6) and then to the nations (28:18). **By what authority** does He have fervor to purify the Father's house? What a strange thing to need proper **authority** to do this.

21:24-27

But Jesus answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: 25 The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?" And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' 26 But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the multitude, ^cfor all count John as a prophet." 27 So they answered Jesus and said, "We do not know." And He said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things. If "John" had heavenly authority, so did Jesus. If they couldn't be honest about John, then Jesus need not give them more to reject (Matthew 7:6). It's not always time to teach people truth.

21:28-32

31 Which of the two did the will of *his* father?" They said to Him, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. This is further proof that the fig tree of earlier verses is not "ethnic Israel," but rather the system of religion championed by "ethnic Israel:" **tax collectors and harlots were Jews/ethnic Israel, and so, they brought fruit and therefore, are not the fig tree—regardless of their ethnicity. By the way, active extortioners and **harlots** do not go to the **kingdom**. It says, they repented (verse 29).**

^c Matt. 14:5; Mark 6:20