

EXPOSITION

I. THE LEADERS’ QUESTION – vv.1-2

A. When the Question Was Asked

- Luke tells us that it was on one of those days that Jesus was teaching in the temple. As we saw last week, Jesus is in the outer courts of the temple, what is known as Solomon’s porch, teaching and preaching the Gospel. He has gained much attention in His royal entry on the back of a donkey, declaring Himself to be the greater Son of David as prince of peace coming into Jerusalem.
- He has also freshly revealed Himself as the prophet of Israel as He declared the “woe” of destruction while wailing over Jerusalem’s destruction. He has declared Himself to have authority over the temple as the great High-Priest in cleansing it, declaring it to be His Father’s House, and driving out those who made merchandise of the House of God.
- During this time He is teaching during the day, then withdrawing each evening, probably into the town of Bethany where He is staying with His friend Lazarus. It was during this week, on one of those days, that He was preaching and teaching that this event takes place.
- We notice at this time there is no mention of miracles, and while there will be a couple while in Jerusalem, His ministry is mostly taken up with declaring the Gospel. We should notice that not only does Jesus come to fulfill and accomplish the Gospel, He is also busy proclaiming it.

B. Who Asked the Question

- There are three categories of men who approach Jesus during this time:
 - 1.) The chief priests – These are the men who are responsible for the care and oversight of what takes place in the temple, particularly the singing and the sacrifices to be offered. Their feathers are particularly ruffled as He has stepped into their territory and did something they should have done long ago in running out the thieves from the court of the Gentiles.
 - 2.) The scribes – These are the men who were studied in the Hebrew Scriptures, and were supposed to be the experts. Their whole occupation was to study, copy, and be consultants as to what the Law of Moses required. They would be a help in this inquisition, as any claims that Jesus would make from Scripture they would be able to affirm or refute.
 - 3.) The elders – These are the men who are appointed as the Jewish social rulers of Israel. They would have the easiest access to the people.
- These three groups are likely the representatives of the Sanhedrin, or ruling body and highest tribunal or court of Israel.

C. How the Question Was Asked

- Luke uses a term that is only found here in the NT, and indicates more than merely asking a question, but a formal confrontation. The word also indicates a degree of “surprise attack”, trying to catch Him off guard. From [19:47](#) we understand that they aren’t merely trying to gain information, but are trying to trap Him and eventually destroy Him.

D. What the Question Was

- It seems there are two questions being asked:
 - 1.) What intrinsic authority do you claim? Who are you? What authority do you have in and of yourself to do these things.
 - 2.) What extrinsic authority do you claim? Who is the one who has given you this authority? If you are not somebody in and of yourself (i.e. you have authority from another), who has given it to you?
 - The “these things” they are referring to include at least to the cleansing of the temple, and possibly also the triumphal entry and prophecy of Jerusalem’s destruction.
 - The answer to their question should have already been obvious. Jesus’ works of healing, ability to control nature (making of water into wine, stilling of the storm), authority over demons, ability to raise the dead, these all declared clearly who He was, together with the truthfulness of His doctrine.
 - We would sometimes like to think that enough evidence or demonstration of miracles would settle disputes about the truthfulness of Christianity, but it is not. All things are, and have been, disputed by men.
...it is not to be thought strange, if even that which is evident to a demonstration be disputed, and called in question, as a doubtful thing, by those that shut their eyes against the light. – Matthew Henry
- What is necessary for men to believe is that they receive new hearts, and a renewing work of the Holy Spirit.

II. JESUS’ QUESTION – vv.3-4

- While they represented the authorities putting Him on trial publicly, He turns the tables. He now puts them on the witness stand. They came to question Him, now He questions them. Even in this He demonstrates His authority.
- His question relates to what He terms “the baptism of John.” John, you will remember, was the appointed prophet of God and forerunner of the Messiah. He was not only cousin to the Lord Jesus, but the one who had had his birth foretold by an Angel to His father Zachariah. He had been called to a ministry in the wilderness, with unusual clothes and diet, and was using the symbol of ceremonial baptism to proclaim the need for repentance and faith in the coming Messiah who would bring in the Kingdom of God.
- This term “baptism of John” refers not merely to the baptism itself, but to John’s whole message and ministry. Where was his ministry from? What was His authority?
- While Jesus asks this question, He Himself defines the only two possibilities. Either it was an authority given from heaven (i.e. God) or it was from men, with no higher authority. If it was from heaven, then it should have been believed and obeyed. If from men, then there was no obligation for belief or obedience.
- Jesus asks this question because of the link between John’s ministry and Jesus. He is not outright evading their question. The right answer to the question of John’s authority is the answer to Jesus’ authority. This would ultimately be the answer to Jesus’ authority, either it is from heaven or from men. The right answer to the question about John would give the right answer about Jesus, since John ultimately testified of the Lord Jesus and who He was.

III. THE LEADERS’ RESPONSE – vv.5-7

A. Their Reasoning

- The word used (Gk. sullogidzomai) is found only here in the NT. It means to converse and give answers back and forth with one another. They had a bit of discussion about how they would answer.
- Notice that both of their options are prefaced with “if we say....” Their answers weren’t prefaced with “well, lets think about it and determine what we believe.” They were not concerned about giving a genuine answer, but only about what the consequences to the two answers were.

1. Option #1

- If they said from heaven, then it answers their own question. John testified of Jesus, that He was from God, the Lamb come into the world to remove sin, the fulfillment of God’s promises. If so, then they would believe this about Jesus and wouldn’t have to ask the question of Him.

2. Option #2

- If they said from men, then the consequence would be that the current excitement and acceptance of the ministry of John and Jesus would cause a riot, and they feared being stoned by the people. This again shows us the amazing popularity at this point of Jesus’ ministry that the leadership feared the people should they say the wrong thing. Within a couple of days this would all change.

B. Their Response

- They answer “we don’t know.” Their answer was not honest. They said they didn’t know, not because they didn’t, but because their two possible answers put them in a place they didn’t desire to be. They did not answer because of the consequences.
- Sometimes “agnosticism”, saying “I don’t know”, is simply an evasion of the truth. To say “I don’t know” is a cover up for the honest answer “I know, but I don’t want to answer”.
- This was not an appropriate answer for leadership who had the responsibility of evaluating, and who clear evidence before them. They were cowards, and now their drive to be man pleasers and their highest desire to preserve their own life, brings them to utter dishonest and absence of commitment to truth.

IV. JESUS’ RESPONSE – v.8

- Because of their dishonesty and refusal to answer the question, Jesus will not answer. He had no obligation to submit to their inquisition and attempt to destroy Him. They knew the answer, therefore He would remain silent.
- Their plan had not worked. This is the first attempt in Jerusalem that Luke records to bring about His destruction, and it has clearly failed. They won’t give up, but this method didn’t work.

APPLICATION

What we learn about God – His gracious and thorough evidence of the truth. He reveals the coming of Christ in the Old Testament, sent the prophet John, worked miracles through the Lord Jesus, raises Him from the dead. God could have simply said repent or perish, but displays His glory and power through these things and then calls men to repentance.

What we learn about Jesus – He clearly displays He is in control of the situation, and uses amazing wisdom at stopping their mouths. They will, in His appointed time, gain apparent control of the situation to put Him to death, but only in His timing and according to His plan.

What we learn about unconverted man - The hardness of men’s hearts who are opposed to the truth. Nothing will satisfy them. Until there is a transformation of their hearts by God, there will only be opposition. What makes us to differ? Only the grace of God. Not our own genius, our own higher spirituality or pliability to the Gospel.

Who do you say Jesus is? What is His authority? Is He from Heaven, or merely from men?

- If you believe He is from Heaven and He is Lord of Heaven, then let us follow Him, trust Him, love Him, obey Him. Let us not be ½ hearted, lukewarm, an “almost Christian” partially attached to Him and also to the world. Let us love His Word and be passionate about making Him known.
- If you believe He is but from men, another among the many human philosophies and man-made religions, then say so. Be honest. Don’t be ugly or belligerent, but be honest. Don’t say so just for your parents, friends, or others’ sake.

Perhaps you say “I don’t know”, then let me ask if your answer is just based on the consequences you fear?

- If I say “Yes, I believe”, then I will be asked why I don’t live differently. Why I don’t love the Scriptures, and God’s worship, and hate wickedness. Why don’t I tell others of Christ.
- If I say “No”, then I will be asked why, or someone might be upset at me. (Note: as parents, we have to be willing to allow our children to be honest without fear we will go on a tirade. Then to have a relationship with them that is able to talk and interact and allow them to ask real and serious questions.)
- There is no “in between”, either you have believed, or you do not believe. If you do not, then God declares that you have great need to believe in Him who He sent. You have need for the forgiveness of sin, for the giving of the Holy Spirit. You stand under the condemnation of God, and are in need of His mercies and forgiveness in Christ.