

Luke 20:1-18

The Beloved Son and His Authority

Intro: Last week as I was standing in the checkout at Walmart, a TIME Magazine issue caught my attention. It was a special edition: *The Science of Good and Evil*.

It had a picture of a silhouette, and inside the man's head were thoughts.

“What makes us moral? Good deeds, good health, understanding the dark side?”

I had no time to read it and did not feel like paying the over-the-top price of \$13.97.

It's a great topic though—what is behind good and evil. What makes one decision good, and one evil?

Our pluralistic-postmodern culture cannot unify around a solid answer.

But God's Word gets us there. The TIME article is actually an ancient topic. Royalties need to be sent back to the Garden of Eden.

To understand the science behind good and evil, we need to be familiar with one word: *Authority*. The whole concept of good and evil goes back to a tree and temptation, and what one man did with authority.

Tree

(Gen 2:9) The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (2:17) ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Temptation

(Gen 3:5) ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

(Gen 3:22) ²² Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil.

It's pretty clear that the science of good and evil comes down to *rejecting authority*. The Lord warned Adam what would happen if he rejected his word.

- With Christ, the whole science of good and evil comes into clear focus; Christ gives us more clarity as to what is at the heart of evil in a fallen world.

Main Point: Rejecting the authority of Christ is the greatest evil; resting in the authority of Christ is the greatest good.

Rejecting the authority of Christ is the greatest evil (1-16)

- There are two parts—the leaders who confront Jesus, and the parable he tells. Both deal with the issue of authority & rejection.

a) people of rejection (1-8)

- The passage begins with Jesus teaching in the temple.
- Literally he was “gospeling” or “good newsing”
- A group of Jewish leaders who represent the Sanhedrin (Jewish court) come to question Jesus.

1) They ask, “By what authority can you cleanse the temple?” (45-46)

2) But also note that they challenge Jesus’s authority in the *midst of his teaching*.

Here’s then an important principle—the teaching of Scripture in the church is an authoritative act.

- Context: most teaching in Jesus’s day used citations of Rabbis. The more Rabbis you cite, the more authoritative your teaching was considered.
- Jesus did not follow that method. *He just pointed to the Word.*

His teaching was so rich with Bible!

This even shapes the church—it’s not that the teacher has authority. *The Word carries the authority.*

- Note, instead of a direct answer, Jesus countered with questions. This was common in Rabbi debates.

If you don’t like multiple choice questions, you won’t care for this:

Jesus says, “which is true, A or B?”

- A. Was John the Baptist truly sent by God?
- B. Or was it just man-made?

- A helpful background may be Luke 7:30—Pharisees rejected John’s Baptism.
- John was the forerunner of Jesus—rejecting John is rejecting Jesus.

Is this a man-made thing, or a God-made thing?

—If it’s a God-made thing, why did they not repent. Since John pointed to Jesus, it’s asking “Why do you not believe.”

—If it’s a man-made thing, then get ready to face the wrath of the crowd.

—So, they take the easy way out—coy, bureaucratic, no comment.

**This also shows that the leaders had no convictions. They had no backbone.

Leaders, especially spiritual leaders need to be men of *conviction*. Conviction based on biblical truth.

***Conviction that is a God-made thing.*

Illus; It reminds me of a time during an election cycle when a presidential candidate was asked about the abortion question. He replied “it’s above my pay grade”.

Actually no. For the highest elected office in the US, it’s not. For the person who holds a pen and power to appoint judges, it’s not. He knew better.

For the religious leaders—this question was not above pay grade. They lacked the conviction.

Apply: But Jesus asks a question that is very relevant for us. Who are we more concerned about? God or people? Do we want to honor Christ, or please a crowd?

Let’s say a hidden sin came out. Are we more ashamed of our reputation before others? Or that God’s honor and glory are tarnished? That’s why Ps. 51 is such a great Psalm of repentance.

David cared more about God’s honor and reputation than his own.

b) parable of rejection (9-16)

- The parable Jesus tells carries the same theme of authority and rejection;
- The vineyard was an allegory that represented Israel as God's covenant people (Is 5:1-7, Ps 80:6-16)
- When each servant goes to collect rent, the tenants come up empty-handed; in turn they mistreat and beat the servant. In the allegory, the servants are prophets.

Finally, the landowner sends his dearly loved son.

- The dearly loved Son is obviously Christ.

Here we see God's gracious hands extended one final time to a hardened people before judgment comes.

So, this is obviously a prophetic judgment passage—but what Jesus says also points to his fate.

*Death. **The greatest evil in the entire course of human history is going to take place. God's only Son will be stretched out on a Roman Cross. All under the orchestrated plan of men who were supposed to be spiritual leaders. But just like the Joseph story in Genesis, the Lord will bring about the greatest good out of the greatest evil.*

- Finally, as a result of Israel's rejection, the kingdom and kingdom leadership goes out to the Gentiles (v16).

2. Resting in the authority of Christ is the greatest good (17-18)

- In these final verses, Jesus uses the image of stone to point to himself.

We have one metaphor, with two pictures: dependability and destruction. A cornerstone and judgment stone. They each say something critical about Christ.

1) Cornerstone—dependability.

- We sing a song about Christ being Cornerstone. It's a common name for churches.
- This verse—from Ps 118:26— meant a lot to the early church (Acts 4:11, 1 Pet 2:7).

It gives a great picture of Christ...rejected yet exalted in highest honor.

- The stone in mind is a *foundation stone*.

- It would bear the weight of two intersecting walls.

The cornerstone is so important because it determines the shape of the building.

What we do, or don't do with Jesus is so important since it will determine the shape of our lives.

It's load-bearing stone...and a fitting picture of who Jesus is.

- Jesus bears the load of people who trust in him.

(Ps 68:19)

¹⁹ Blessed be the Lord,
who daily bears us up;
God is our salvation.

(Matt 11:28)

²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Jesus is most dependable. He is the burden-bearing Cornerstone.

2. The crushing stone—destruction (v18)

There are a couple of OT references that sound similar.

(Is 8:14-15)

¹³ But the Lord of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.
¹⁴ And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ¹⁵ And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken.”

- The point is that the Beloved Son has full judgment authority.

We can either rest in him with a reverent and awe-struck fear, or the fear of dread at his judgment.

- The stone metaphor actually addressed the *driving fear* of the chief priests, scribes, and elders (v6)—they could be stoned to death.

It is as if Jesus says—fear the stone that can really do damage.

Much like 12:4

⁴“I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. ⁵But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!

Clearly, resting in the authority of Jesus, the cornerstone and crushing stone is the greatest good.

Gospel: Reject or Rest. Those are the only two responses to Jesus. The Bible says it really splits humanity down the middle. And it sums up the science of good and evil.

I think the answer to the question of good and evil boils down to this: what do you do with Jesus? Are you his worshiper, or will you face his wrath?

Application to graduates.

1. The greatest fear is to fear the Lord Jesus Christ. Not in dread, but in awe-struck reverence.
2. Jesus expects there to be fruit from your lives. Don't send his servants (preachers of the Word) back empty-handed.
3. I can't encourage you enough to have Christ alone as your Cornerstone. Rest on him, the load bearing spiritual foundation of your life. Live for him!

Only one life,

Twill soon Be past,

Only what's done for Christ will last