

Mark 11 - Passion Week; Triumphal Entry; Cursing the Fig Tree; Cleansing the Temple; A Lesson on Prayer; Questions on Jesus' Authority

V. Ultimate sacrifice of the servant (Mark 11:1–16:20)

- (1) Presentation and rejection of the servant (Mark 11:1–12:44)
 - (A) Triumphal entry (11:1-11)
 - (B) Cursing the fig tree (11:12-14)
 - (C) Cleansing of the Temple (11:15-19)
 - (D) Instructions on faith (11:20-26)
 - (E) Questioning of Christ's authority (11:27-33)

Mark 11

V. Ultimate sacrifice of the servant (Mark 11:1–16:20)

- (1) Presentation and rejection of the servant (Mark 11:1–12:44)
 - (A) Triumphal entry (11:1-11) (Cf. Matt 21:1-11; Luke 19:28-40; John 12:12-19)

Jesus' Ministry in Jerusalem (Cf. Luke 19:28–21:38)

- 1 And as they *approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near **the Mount of Olives**, He *sent two of His disciples,
- 1 As they *approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, He *sent two of His disciples,
- 1 When they came near Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples on ahead

- 1 And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples,
 - Mark describes Jesus' approach to Jerusalem from Jericho. Jesus and the disciples would have come to Bethany first, then Bethphage, traveling from the east.
 - These villages were on the southeastern slope of the Mt of Olives
 - "...the Mount of Olives" - about two miles east of Jerusalem. From the peak at 2,600 feet, there is a breathtaking panorama of Jerusalem.
 - Here the Lord will do something He had never allowed before: He would present Himself as the *Meshiach Nagid*, the Messiah the King, in accordance to the OT prophecies, on the

very day that the angel Gabriel had prophesied to Daniel over 480 years earlier! (Dan 9:25)

2 and *said to them, "Go into the village **opposite you**, and immediately as you enter it you will find a **colt** tied *there*, on which no one has ever sat; untie it and bring *it here*.

2 and *said to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied *there*, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it *here*.

2 and told them, "Go into the village ahead of you. As soon as you go into it, you will find a colt tied up that no one has ever ridden. Untie it, and bring it along.

2 And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him.

- "...opposite you" - this was evidently Bethphage

- "...a colt" - since Mark is writing to the Gentiles, he doesn't develop the prophetic background of this pivotal event, deliberately fulfilling the predictions of Zechariah 500 years earlier (Zech 9:9).

— An unbroken colt: an animal devoted to a sacred task was to be one that had not been put to ordinary use (Num 19:2; Deut 21:3; 1 Sam 6:7)

— Jesus told the disciples to bring both the colt and its mother to Him (Matt 21:2)

3 And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The **Lord** has need of it'; and immediately he will send it back here."

3 If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' you say, 'The Lord has need of it'; and immediately he will send it back here."

3 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?,' say, 'The Lord needs it,' and he will send it back here at once."

3 And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.

- "...Lord" - this is the only place where either Matthew or Mark use this title as a name for Jesus

4 They went away and found a colt tied at the door, outside in the street; and they *untied it.

4 They went away and found a colt tied at the door, outside in the street; and they *untied it.

4 So they went and found the colt outside in the street tied up next to a doorway. While they were untying it,

4 And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him.

- Matthew states that there were two animals, an ass and a colt (Matt 21:2)

5 And some of the bystanders were saying to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?"

5 Some of the bystanders were saying to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?"

5 some men standing there asked them, "What are you doing untying that colt?"

5 And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt?

- The bystanders may have included the owner of the animals (Luke 19:33)

— The Synoptics likely recorded the details of untying the colt as a messianic sign (Cf. Gen 49:8-12); pre-Christian Jewish texts interpreted Gen 49:10 as messianic

6 And they told them just as Jesus had said, and they gave them permission.

6 They spoke to them just as Jesus had told *them*, and they gave them permission.

6 The disciples told them what Jesus had said, and the men let them go.

6 And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.

7 They *brought the colt to Jesus and *put their **cloaks on it**; and He sat on it.

7 They *brought the colt to Jesus and put their coats on it; and He sat on it.

7 They brought the colt to Jesus, threw their coats on it, and he sat on it.

7 And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him.

- "...cloaks on it" - the garments placed on the colt were outer cloaks or robes, the bright colors of which would give the colt the appearance of bearing the accouterments of royalty

- The fact that Jesus could ride an unbroken colt was a miracle in itself

— This suggests that Jesus fulfilled the Adamic Covenant mandate to subdue animals (Gen 1:28; Cf. 17:27); the Second Adam

- When Israel's rulers wanted to present themselves as servants of the people, they rode donkeys (Judges 10:4; 12:14); when they entered as military leaders, they rode horses.

8 And many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields.

8 And many spread their coats in the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields.

8 Many people spread their coats on the road, while others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields.

8 And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way.

- Palm branches had become a nationalistic symbol when Simon Maccabaeus delivered Jerusalem 150 years earlier

- The palm frond was the symbol of the 2nd Maccabean Revolt (1 Macc 13:51)
- The Passover crowd had heard about Lazarus (John 12:12-18)
- The spreading of outer garments before a king was not uncommon (2 Kings 9:13)

9 And those who went in front and those who followed were **shouting: "Hosanna!"**

BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD;

9 Those who went in front and those who followed were shouting: "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord;

9 Those who went ahead and those who followed him were shouting, "Hosanna! How blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

9 And they that went before, and they that followed, **cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh** in the name of the Lord:

— "...shouting" - the Greek indicates that those who followed repeatedly shouted. This was probably an antiphonal chant between those in front and those behind...

— "...Hosanna!" - this is a transliteration of a Hebrew expression meaning, "Save, I pray" (Ps 118:25a)

— "...BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES" - an exact quotation from the LXX of Ps 118:26

— This was a common greeting for visitors to Jerusalem

10 Blessed *is* the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest!"

10 Blessed *is* the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest!"

10 How blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

10 Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.

- Their reference to the coming Davidic kingdom shows that they hoped for its establishment soon (2 Sam 7:16; Amos 9:11-12)

— Some in the crowd acknowledged Jesus as the Son of David (Matt 21:9)

- "Stone which the builders refused has become the headstone of the corner" (Ps 118:22-23; Matt 21:42-44; Acts 4:11; Ps 118:25-26)

This was one of the Hallel Psalms sung in connection with the Passover festival, and was thus particularly appropriate at this time. That the crowd used the words in a Messianic sense is made clear by the next verse.

11 And Jesus entered Jerusalem *and came* into the temple area; and **after looking around** at everything, He left for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late.

11 Jesus entered Jerusalem and came into the temple; and after looking around at everything, He left for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late.

11 Then Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the Temple and looked around at everything. Since it was already late, he went out with the Twelve to Bethany.

11 And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

— "...after looking around" - His eyes would surely take in the booths of the money-changers and of the sellers of doves, which were to be the objects of his displeasure on the following day

— Since it was late—the city gates closed at sunset—He headed to Bethany with the disciples to spend the night

— This verse makes it clear that the city of Jerusalem did not welcome Jesus as those among His following did. When Jesus finally entered the temple precincts, there was no priestly greeting. He was basically ignored. All that He could do was look over the precincts, then retire to Bethany with His disciples.

(B) Cursing the fig tree (11:12-14) (Cf. Matt 21:18-22)

12 On the next day, when they had left Bethany, He became hungry.

12 On the next day, when they had left Bethany, He became hungry.

12 The next day, as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus became hungry.

12 And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:

13 Seeing from a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs.

13 Seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs.

13 Seeing in the distance a fig tree covered with leaves, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing except leaves because it wasn't the season for figs.

13 And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.

- Small, edible buds appeared on fig trees usually appeared in March, before the leaves appeared in April. The lack of buds indicated that this tree wouldn't bear figs later on, even though there were leaves on the tree.

14 And He said to it, **"May no one ever eat fruit from you again!"** And His disciples were listening.

14 He said to it, **"May no one ever eat fruit from you again!"** And His disciples were listening.

14 So he told it, **"May no one ever eat fruit from you again!"** Now his disciples were listening to this.

14 And Jesus answered and said unto it, **No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever.** And his disciples heard it.

- Jesus used this as an opportunity to teach His disciples an important truth using this tree as an object lesson

— Being a prophet, Jesus performed a symbolic act (Cf. Is 20:1-6; Jer 13:1-11; 19:1-13; Ezek 4:1-15)

— He cursed the tree to teach them a lesson, not because it failed to produce fruit

- The tree was a good illustration of the large unbelieving element within the nation of Israel

— God had looked to that generation of Israelites for spiritual fruit, as Jesus had hoped to find physical fruit on the fig tree

- This is the only instance of our Lord using His miraculous powers to destroy something in nature.

— He was making a lesson on failure to be fruitful.

The Cursed Fig Tree

An incident widely puzzling to those who have an unhealthy eagerness to find fault. The condemning of the tree and the cleansing of the Temple were both symbolic acts that illustrated the sad spiritual condition of the nation of Israel: fruitless and corrupt - Cf. John 12:35-41.

- Symbol of Israel (Jer 8:13; 29:17; Hosea 9:10; Joel 1:7; Micah 7:1-6; Nahum 3:12; Zech 10:2)
- The fig tree produces leaves in March or April and then starts to bear fruit in June, with another crop in August, sometimes a third in December
- The tree dried up "from the roots" (v20). The year before, John the Baptist had put the ax to the roots of the tree.

(C) Cleansing of the Temple (11:15-19) (Cf. Matt 21:12-13; Luke 19:45-46)

15 Then they *came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple *area* and began to drive out those who were selling and buying on the temple *grounds*, and He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves;

15 Then they *came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves;

15 When they came to Jerusalem, he went into the Temple and began to throw out those who were selling and those who were buying in the Temple. He overturned the moneychangers' tables and the chairs of those who sold doves.

15 And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves;

- This was Jesus' second messianic act of His formal presentation to Israel (1st was the Triumphal Entry)

— Jesus' "house cleaning" represented His authority as Messiah to clean up the corrupt nation of Israel, and also showed His zeal for God's honor

- The marketplace existed in the Court of the Gentiles

- The money changers were in the employ of Annas and the high priestly family

— The animals were sold for sacrificial purposes, and the moneychangers exchanged the common currency for the half-shekel necessary to pay the temple tax

— Exorbitant rates were charged

Jesus had cleansed the Temple during his first Passover visit (John 2:13-22), but it was not long before the religious leaders had permitted the money changers and merchants to return (they were getting a piece of the action).

Mark emphasizes those that "sold doves." The dove was one of the few sacrifices that poor people could afford (Lev 14:22). It was the sacrifice that Joseph and Mary brought at Jesus' dedication (Luke 2:24). Jesus was always especially sensitive to the poor (as seen in Mark 12:41-44).

16 and He would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple *grounds*.

16 and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple.

16 He wouldn't even let anyone carry a vessel through the Temple.

16 And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

- This verse, unique to Mark, shows the extent to which Jesus went in purifying the temple

- The Court of the Gentiles had become a convenient cross-town shortcut to the Mount of Olives. Even the *Mishnah* contained an ordinance aimed at curbing traffic by forbidding anyone to enter the Temple Mount carrying his staff or sandal or wallet, or to use it as a shortcut, but people still did so. It became a huge religious circus.

17 And He *began* to teach and say to them, "Is it not written: '**MY HOUSE WILL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS?** But you have made it a **DEN OF ROBBERS.**'"

17 And He *began* to teach and say to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a robbers' den."

17 Then he began to teach them: "It is written, is it not, 'My house is to be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you've turned it into a hideout for bandits!"

17 And he taught, saying unto them, **Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.**

- "...**MY HOUSE**" - Jesus was claiming ownership of the temple, instead of the Jewish leaders

— The quote from Is 56:7 presented the temple as God's "house"; thus, Jesus was claiming to be God

- "...**HOUSE OF PRAYER**" - the Court of the Gentiles should have been a place for praying, but it was instead a place for preying and paying

- "...**FOR ALL THE NATIONS**" - Mark adds this phrase that Matthew omits. It would have special significance for Gentile readers

— God permitted Gentiles to come and worship Him in the temple court of the Gentiles, indicating His desire to bring them into a relationship with Himself

— The Jewish leaders made this practically impossible, by converting the only place Gentiles could pray in the temple complex into a market abounding in fraud

— They had expelled the Gentile worshippers to make room for Jewish "robbers"

- "...**DEN OF ROBBERS**" - the place to which thieves run when they want to hide. The Temple was a cover-up.

- Jesus quotes from Is 56:7, a prophecy that was yet unfulfilled, as well as a statement of God's perennial intent for the temple

— From Jesus' mouth, it was also a prophecy of conditions in the messianic kingdom (Cf. Zech 14:21)

Both Isaiah and Jeremiah warned that the presence of the Temple is no guarantee of blessing from God (Is 1:10-17; Jer 7:1-16). The quote from Isaiah highlights the purpose of the Court of the Gentiles, specifically Is 56:6-7.

Is 56:6-7:

6 "Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, To attend to His service and to love the name of the LORD, To be His servants, every one who keeps the Sabbath so as not to profane it, And holds firmly to My covenant;

7 Even those I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples."

This was a massive national sin against God and the lost people of the world! And, Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD (Jer 7:11). The high priest's family had perverted the Temple into a means of extortion. Thus, "The zeal of thine house has eaten me up" (Ps 69:9; John 2:19).

Jesus also thus exposed the sins of the leaders: they looked upon the Temple primarily as place of sacrifice; Jesus saw it as a place of prayer.

A Synopsis of Jesus' Teaching in the Temple (Cf. Luke 19:47-48)

18 And the chief priests and the scribes heard *this*, and they *began* seeking how to put Him to death; for they were afraid of Him, because all the crowd was astonished at His teaching.

18 The chief priests and the scribes heard *this*, and *began* seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching.

18 When the high priests and elders heard this, they began to look for a way to kill him, because they were afraid of him, since the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.

- Jesus' actions and words had threatened the reputation and resources of the Sanhedrin members

— The scribes and chief priests obviously took a dim view of these proceedings and plotted to kill Him. The intensity of their hatred becomes clear later (11:27–12:37).

- Only Mark records that the chief priests and scribes were afraid of Jesus

— The reason was the impact His teaching was having on the multitudes that gathered from all over the world for Passover

19 And whenever evening came, they would leave the city.

19 When evening came, they would go out of the city.

19 When evening came, Jesus and his disciples would leave the city.

19 And when even was come, he went out of the city.

- Jesus and the disciples again left Jerusalem and spent the night on the Mount of Olives (Luke 21:37), probably in Bethany (v11)

(D) Instructions on faith (11:20-26)

The Lesson of the Cursed Fig Tree (Cf. Matt 21:19-22)

20 As they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered **from the roots up.**

20 As they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots *up.*

20 While they were walking along early the next morning, they saw the fig tree dried up to its roots.

20 And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

- "...from the roots" - death was spreading through the tree from the roots, its source of nourishment

— "roots" symbolized the religious leaders of Israel; the curse of spiritual death would spread from them to the entire generation of unbelieving Jews

21 And being reminded, Peter *said to Him, "Rabbi, look, the fig tree that You cursed has withered."

21 Being reminded, Peter *said to Him, "Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered."

21 Remembering what Jesus had said, Peter pointed out to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has dried up!"

21 And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

- Peter connected the judgment with Jesus' words

— Jesus' pronouncement of judgment on that generation of Jews would have a similar effect

- Roots are the secret part of the tree that no one sees

- Dryness comes when you neglect your devotional time

22 And Jesus answered and *said to them, **"Have faith in God.**

22 And Jesus *answered saying to them, **"Have faith in God.**

22 Jesus told his disciples, **"Have faith in God!**

22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, **Have faith in God.**

- Rather than explain the symbolic significance of the cursing of the fig tree, Jesus proceeded to focus on the means by which the miracle happened

— This was an important lesson on discipleship that Jesus had taught before (Cf. Matt 6:13-14; 7:7; 17:20; 18:19; Luke 11:9; 17:6), but it only appears here in Mark

23 Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be

granted to him.

23 Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be *granted him.*

23 I tell all of you with certainty, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' if he doesn't doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.

23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

- The lesson was that dependent trust in God can accomplish humanly impossible things through prayer; God is the source of the power to change

— "moving a mountain" is a universal symbol for doing something that appears to be impossible (Cf. Zech 4:7)

— From this lesson, Jesus presupposed that overcoming the difficulty in view was God's will

— A disciple will neither doubt God's ability to do what he requests (since God *can* do anything), nor will he doubt that God *will* grant his petition (since it's God's will).

— By using hyperbole, Jesus is stating that disciples should be absolutely confident in God's readiness to respond in faith

24 Therefore, I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, **believe that you have received** them, and they will be *granted* to you.

24 Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be *granted* to you.

24 That is why I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours.

24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

- "...believe that you have received" - a present tense imperative, calling for persistent, continuing faith

— Superior manuscript evidence favors the aorist tense—you did receive

— In other words, we are to keep on believing that God has already given us our request

— True faith in God is based on His Word (John 15:7; Rom 10:17), and His Word reveals His will to us

The purpose of prayer is not to get man's will done in heaven but to get God's will done on earth. Prayer is God's way of enlisting you in what He is doing!

25 And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you for your offenses.

25 Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions.

25 "Whenever you stand up to pray, forgive whatever you have against anyone, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins.

25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

- Faith in God is not the only condition for answered prayer: one must also forgive their fellow persons

— Forgiving others is a precondition for obtaining forgiveness from the Father (Matt 6:14-15)

26 [But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your offenses.]

26 [But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.]

26 But if you do not forgive, your Father in heaven will not forgive your sins."

26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

- Statements such as these, which make God's forgiveness dependent on our forgiveness, have been misunderstood as being legal in nature.

— However, Christ does not here address himself to the unsaved but to his disciples, those who have already entered into a saving relationship with himself.

— The forgiveness of which he speaks is not the initial forensic act of forgiveness which abolishes the guilt of sin. It is rather the forgiveness of a father which restores fellowship.

— The point here is that a disciple cannot pray effectively if an unforgiving spirit has broken his fellowship with God.

— Prayer also involves forgiveness as well as faith. I must be in fellowship with both my Father in heaven and my brethren on earth if God is to answer my prayers (Cf. Matt 5:21-26; 6:14-15; 18:15-35).

A Busy Tuesday

The debates recorded in the following verses all took place on one busy day—Tuesday of the Passion Week:

1. The source of our Lord's authority (Mark 11:27-33)
2. The parable of the vineyard & husbandmen (Mark 12:1-12)

3. A question about taxation (Mark 12:13-17)
4. The resurrection (Mark 12:18-27)
5. The greatest commandment (Mark 12:28-34)
6. The Messiah's relationship to David (Mark 12:35-40)
7. An account of the widow's gift of two mites (Mark 12:41-44)

(E) Questioning of Christ's authority (11:27-33) (Cf. Matt 21:23-27; Luke 20:1-8)

Jesus' Teaching in the Temple (Mark 11:27—12:44)

27 And they *came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple *area*, the **chiefpriests**, the **scribes**, and the **elders** *came to Him,

27 They *came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders *came to Him,

27 Then they went into Jerusalem again. While Jesus was walking in the Temple, the high priests, the scribes, and the elders came to him

27 And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders.

— "...chief priests...scribes...elders" - the three groups that made up the Sanhedrin

— This was an official inquiry prompted by Jesus' presence and His cleansing of the temple

— They inquired about His credentials: who gave Him the authority to do and say what He did; they questioned the nature and source of His authority

28 and *began* saying to Him, "**By what authority** are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?"

28 and *began* saying to Him, "By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?"

28 and asked him, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority to do them?"

28 And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?

— "...By what authority" - the leaders of the religious establishment were bent on tripping Him up

— The officials referred to Christ's purging of the Temple (John 2:18). It was said that the Temple could be cleansed only by the Sanhedrin, by a prophet, or by the Messiah.

— As official guardians of the Law, the members of the Sanhedrin had both the right and the responsibility to investigate anyone who claimed to be sent by God (Deut 18:15-22). But they did not have pure motives: they were seeking to destroy Him (v18).

29 But Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question, and you answer Me, and *then* I will tell you by what authority I do these things.

29 And Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question, and you answer Me, and *then* I will tell you by what authority I do these things.

29 Jesus told them, "I'll ask you one question. Answer me, and then I'll tell you by what authority I'm doing these things.

29 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.

30 Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men? Answer Me."

30 Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men? Answer Me."

30 Was John's authority to baptize from heaven or from humans? Answer me."

30 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me.

- Why take them all the way back to John the Baptist? God does not teach us a new truth if we have rejected the truth He has already revealed!

— Jesus is not refusing to answer their question: He only refused to accept and endorse their hypocrisy

- Essentially, Jesus asked these leaders if they believed God was behind John's ministry. John had taught that God was behind Jesus' ministry.

— If the critics said they believed God was behind John's ministry, they would have had to agree that God was behind Jesus' ministry

— Jesus challenges them to respond ("answer me")

— By asking a question in response to a question, Jesus did not avoid the question, but He was using a common device that was designed to get an opponent to say something that the opponent would not ordinarily say otherwise.

31 And they began considering the *implications* among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Then why did you not believe him?'

31 They began reasoning among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Then why did you not believe him?'

31 They began discussing this among themselves. "If we say, 'From heaven,' he'll say, 'Then why didn't you believe him?'

31 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him?

32 But should we say, 'From men'?"—they were afraid of the people, for they all considered John to have been a real prophet.

32 But shall we say, 'From men'?"—they were afraid of the people, for everyone considered John to have been a real prophet.

32 But if we say, 'From humans'...?" They were afraid of the crowd, because everyone really thought John was a prophet.

32 But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed.

33 Answering Jesus, they *said, "We do not know." And Jesus *said to them, **"Neither am I telling you by what authority I do these things."**

33 Answering Jesus, they *said, "We do not know." And Jesus *said to them, **"Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things."**

33 So they answered Jesus, "We don't know." Then Jesus told them, **"Then I won't tell you by what authority I'm doing these things."**

33 And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, **Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.**

- The critics' concern for their own position rather than the truth is obvious in their refusal to answer Jesus. Clearly they rejected both John and Jesus as God's authorized prophets.

— Jesus refused to give them a more direct answer because He knew they were trying to discredit Him. Rejection of revelation shut the door on further revelation.