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*"And when He entered the temple the chief priests and elders of the people came up to Him as He was teaching, and said, 'By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?'" (Matthew 21:23)*

**I. Understanding Authority**

- a. *Authority* (Gr. *exousia*) is a state of control over something, freedom of choice, right (e.g., the 'right' to act, decide, or dispose of one's property as one chooses.
  1. potential or resource to command, control, or govern, capability, might, power
- b. A double question was asked, *what authority* and *who gave you this authority?*
- c. Jesus' actions imply a personal authority greater than that of a mere village preacher from Galilee. His action in the temple implies a claim to authority greater than that of the priests who were responsible for its affairs. Who had given Him such authority?
- d. Basically, What right did an unordained carpenter have to make such a nuisance of Himself?
- e. Jesus answers their questions with a question, but focused on John the Baptist: where did his authority come from? From heaven or from men?
- f. If they said, "From heaven, they had lost their case. Jesus would immediately ask why they did not believe Him.
- g. Almost everyone would have agreed that he was a prophet, and how could anyone speak of a martyred prophet as "from men"?
- h. John's message, "Repent", is the precondition for Jesus' message, "Believe." If they have not done the one, they cannot do the other. They must face up to who John was.
- i. The chief priests/elders did not want to risk *losing face*, so they answered, "We do not know."
- j. The Jewish leaders lacked integrity.

**II. The Authority of Christ (Colossians 1:15-23)**

- a. In this passage, Paul makes it plain that Jesus is over all things.
- b. Christ is called "the image of the invisible God" and "the firstborn over all creation" (v.15).
- c. The word firstborn refers to an honored position of authority. (v.16)
- d. Christ has authority over creation, over the Church, over death, and finally "in everything."
- e. Christ is both before all things, therefore, "in Him all things hold together." Christ is supreme.

**III. Apply the Scriptures to Your Life**

- a. God appointed lesser authorities in this world. Parental authority over their children (Eph 6:1). Husbands have authority over their wives (Ephesians 5:22-24). Kings have authority (Rom 13:1-7). The apostles had authority over the church (Acts 4:34-35; Philemon 1:3).
- b. God has established authority for order. Jesus has delegated authority to His disciples.
- c. How much authority has Jesus delegated to believers?
- d. The very first thing that we must understand that we are *under authority*. (Luke 17:10)
- e. A believer's life is one of total dependence on God, as modeled by Jesus. (Luke 22:42 and John 5:30).
- f. The authority of the believer comes from God and from God's Word. As we are God's ambassadors, we can speak with His authority, appealing to the world on behalf of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). Every authority has designated responsibilities.
- g. We best understand authority, when we recognize the authority we are under and fulfill the authority's responsibility.