

A Question of Authority – Growth Group Study

Bible readings: Matthew 3:1–12 & 21:23–27

19 May 2019 - John Malcolm

1) Can you recall a time when your authority was questioned?

Perhaps your authority to be backstage, to drive, to undertake certain work or use certain equipment? Perhaps when new equipment was first introduced to an office, (computer, photocopier, fax machine) only certain people were permitted to use them.

How do people tend to react when their authority is questioned? (Defend, deflect, attack, take offence and play the victim card?)

2) Read Matthew 2.28-29 & 8.8-9 & 9.8

What did those who encountered Jesus discover about him?

3) Read Matthew 21.8-14, 18-19 & 23

What were the key events leading up this encounter with Jesus and what was happening to motivate the chief priests to question Jesus' authority?

How did the events in and around the temple reveal Jesus' authority?

4) Why is the temple a significant venue for this test of authority?

Read Ezekiel 10.18 What does this tell us about the presence of God in the temple?

This departure of God is followed by an invasion by the Babylonians, who completely destroy the temple that Solomon built. A second temple was built. Over the next four hundred years, the second temple will be architecturally improved and expanded, especially during the reign of King Herod, but the glorious indwelling presence of God does not return to this temple until Jesus enters in through the gates.

The Temple and the Tabernacle - Daniel J Hays

If God's glory had departed the temple over 400 years prior to Jesus, what does this say about the authority of the priests to challenge him?

If the Holy of Holies was vacated by God, where was the true Holy of Holies when Jesus was in the temple?

5) Read Matthew 3:7–12 & 21.24-25

Do you think Jesus is being evasive or exerting authority by posing a question rather than answering theirs?

Who was John the Baptist and what were the key marks of his ministry?

What was John's opinion of the religious leaders of the day and how did that match up with Jesus' view of them? (Matt 12.31 & 23.33)

The minister stated, ... *they have revealed they are unable or unwilling to recognise God's authority either in John or in Jesus*. Why was it so difficult for the priests to answer this question? What would it have meant if they had answered directly?

6) If the priests had looked at Jesus' ministry with open hearts what would they have discovered about Jesus' authority from:

Matt 8.26-27

Mark 2.9

Matt 4.23

Mark 1:27

7) What further can we learn about his authority from:

Matt 28.7

Matt 28:18–20

Philippians 2:9–11

Colossians 1:16–17

8) The minister said, *Part of the human problem is the illusion we have of personal freedom, when in fact we are captive to sin*. Read Matt 6.24, John 8.34-36 Rom 6.16-18

What do we learn from these verses about the human problem and Jesus' authority?

How might Jesus' authority be both a comfort for us and a challenge to us?

What difference does it make to our approach to life if Jesus has the authority we considered in questions 6 & 7?

Personal reflection

Are there areas/aspects of your life where you do not let Jesus exercise authority – what difference would it make if you surrendered these to him?

As you read the bible in the week ahead, look at it through the lens of how Jesus uses his authority in the lives of those he encounters.