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NEWS & EVENTS – OCTOBER 2021

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*On one of the days while He was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders confronted Him, and they spoke, saying to Him, "Tell us by what **authority** You are doing these things, or who is the one who gave You this **authority**?" Jesus answered and said to them, "I will also ask you a question, and you tell Me: Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?" They **reasoned among themselves**, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet." So they answered that they did not know where it came from. And Jesus said to them, "Nor will I tell you by what **authority** I do these things." (Luke 20:1-8)*

Questioning Authority

Authority is the basis of all life decisions. Who authorized Jesus to teach in the temple and preach the gospel? This was the foundation of the confrontation of the religious leadership. They didn't sanction His activity, so they couldn't control Him. He was engaging people in real life issues and teaching them to trust God. People were following Him and lives were changing. If this kept up it would wreck the system. People would begin to question the authority of not only the religious system but the practitioners of it as well. Power was ebbing away. They were losing their influence. They were losing their place of authority. So they launched into a full frontal assault and the platform was authority. What authority was He working under or who gave Him authority. They wanted a confession that He was sent by God and a revelation that He was Messiah as some were saying. Possibly these were some of the ones witnessing riding the donkey into Jerusalem. Their tactic seemed to be that if He was the One fulfilling the prophecy about Messiah, then let's see if He will exercise that authority. Their confrontation was designed to provoke. The enemy strategy is often provocative. Jesus answers a question with a question. This was often His strategy in the face of enemy attack. It still is. He uses an offensive strategy when natural man guards his response. Instead of hunkering down in a defensive posture Jesus paints the opposition into a no-win corner. Those who question His authority are forced to declare the source of theirs.

The source of John's baptism, a baptism of repentance, symbolized by water, was the precursor of another kind of baptism. John was a prophet. He spoke about what God was saying. John confronted the same kind of religious practitioners and called them to repentance. He wanted to know who warned them about the wrath to come. Jesus called them out about what they heard and saw concerning John's baptism. Did they practice it in resolve to repentance because it was from heaven and authoritative? Was it their unbelief that was the basis of their life decisions? Or did they choose to ignore the admonition to repent and be baptized because it was only some theory of a madman in the desert? Unbelief is the ruination of religion. If this was their response, they were at great peril. Repentance is the restorative response to the ruination of religion. In their reasoning among themselves they tried to justify their answer to the question Jesus posed. Why did they not believe John if his authority was from heaven? Christ always knows the answer to the question He asks because He is the Christ...the King. True Kingdom Authority is authorized by God. Man-granted authority is always tainted with the corruption common to man. To prop up their man-centered authority, institutional religionists will weigh the opinion of man in their life decisions. Authority is the basis of all life decisions. The question is what kind of authority is represented by religious men. If authority is not heaven-based it will be based on the whims of weak-willed men. When the authority of Jesus is questioned, we will find it is absolutely authoritative.

Consider this declaration of the authority of Christ: *God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. 3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the **exact representation** of His nature, and upholds all things by the **word of His power**. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. (Hebrews 1:1-4)* The real question of real authority is whether we believe Jesus has it or not. If not Him, who? In the fulfillment of the mission that He was sent to do, He arose to sit down at the right hand of ultimate authority, the Majesty of the Most High God. Authority doesn't get any higher than that.

Blessings to you,
Pastor Sam

