

**Luke 20:1-8** Now it happened on one of those days, as He taught the people in the temple and preached the gospel, that the chief priests and the scribes, together with the elders, confronted Him

**2** and spoke to Him, saying, "Tell us, by what authority are You doing these things? Or who is he who gave You this authority?"

**3** But He answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one thing, and answer Me: **4** The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men?"

**5** And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' **6** But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us, for they are persuaded that John was a prophet." **7** So they answered that they did not know where it was from.

**8** And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

Most of Tuesday in Jesus' "Week of Passion" was recorded in Matthew 21:1-46, although there are parallel passages. On this day Jesus had controversies with the leaders in Israel. First, in Matthew 21:23-46; Matthew 22:1-14 there was a controversy about authority and an answer given to the Sanhedrin. The text says in Matthew 21:23 that the chief priests and the elders of the people went to Jesus and asked, "By what authority are you doing these things? . . . And who gave you this authority?" When one used the term "the chief priests and the elders", that meant the Sanhedrin, who were the seventy Jews in the Supreme Court of Israel. This is interesting and important as the Bible is read, because the Sanhedrin was mostly composed of rich Sadducees. The Sadducees were the people who did not believe in miracles or the resurrection of the dead. They didn't believe in any supernatural power. They were the rich materialists of their day; and along with the rich and religious people, they composed the Supreme Court who judged the people. They were the people who had authority, and their authority was questioned and even challenged when Jesus cast out the money changers from the temple. He claimed authority by that act.

Therefore, they asked Him, "By what authority are you doing these things?" Jesus' reply is in Matthew 21:24-27 :

"Jesus replied, 'I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John's baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men?' They discussed it among themselves and said, 'If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' But if we say, 'From men'—

we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet.'

So they answered Jesus, 'We don't know.'"

They lied! What they needed to say was, "We are afraid to answer because whatever we say will be used against us." Jesus presented them with a true righteous dilemma. Either answer they could give to the question proved them to be hypocritical. "Then he said, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.'" (21:27) There is a very important lesson to be learned from Jesus in this passage: we do not have to answer every question. If we know that a question is being asked simply to ensnare us and involve us in a discussion that will degrade the gospel and degrade God and Christ, then we can simply say that we do not want to answer. We need to learn to ask the question that enables us to escape a tricky question. What really happened was that the Sanhedrin rejected the Father, because they knew very well that Jesus' authority came from God. These people had even sent Nicodemus to Jesus earlier to say, "Rabbi, we, the rulers of Israel, know that you are a teacher come from God, because nobody can do the things you do unless God is with him." They had rejected the Father by rejecting the One whom He sent.