

Matthew 21:23-32. the Elders Question Christ Concerning His Authority.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

Christ's authority is not questioned by those who recognize the importance of humility and repentance.

Scripture: Proverbs 16:18, Matthew 21:23, Luke 18:9, Philippians 2:3, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5

Topics: "Jesus Authority", "Repentance Mercy"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer delves into the last two days of Jesus' public ministry, highlighting the profound conversations and warnings He shared with His disciples. Despite the enemies' attempts to trap Jesus with questions about His authority, His wisdom and parables confounded them, revealing the true nature of repentance and the dangers of pride. Jesus' teachings emphasize the importance of humility, repentance, and the transformative power of God's mercy, even for the most sinful.

Transcript

We are now beginning to read the account of the last two days of our Lord's public ministry--the Tuesday and Wednesday before his death. There are very ample records of the conversations he held on those days. None who heard him, knew that he would so soon cease to speak on earth; but we know that these were his last warnings.

Early in the morning he arrived as usual at Jerusalem, having conversed with his disciples on the way concerning the withered fig-tree, and the power of faith and prayer. He found his enemies much enraged against him, both on account of his words and his doings. They had witnessed the buyers and sellers, at his command, leaving their accustomed posts. The sight was a reproach to those who had so long allowed the profanation of the house of prayer. Having consulted together, they proposed a question which they imagined he could not answer without furnishing them with a new accusation against him--"By what authority do you these things?" If he should reply, "By the authority of God," then they resolved to accuse him of blasphemy; and if he said, "By my own," of rebellion. But the wisdom of the Lord easily confounded the cunning of men. He answered by proposing a question they could not answer. Therefore they were compelled to reply that they did not know whether John the Baptist was a true prophet or not. What a confession for teachers of religion to make! All who hear it might naturally conclude that those who did not know whether John were a true prophet, might not know whether Jesus was.

But while his enemies were suffering under the confusion of their defeat, the Lord related a parable, which must have confounded them still more. There were often gathered around the Savior a class of persons whom the Pharisees considered as the dregs and scum of the earth. They were penitents who had once led wicked lives; they were such persons as the rich tax-collector and the weeping sinner. Once they had openly disobeyed the command of their God, and had insolently answered, "I will not;" but afterwards they had repented; while the Pharisees, with all their professions, had never yet really obeyed the will of God. It was easy to say which of these characters was the most guilty. Even if the open transgressors had never repented, they would not have been so wicked in God's sight as the false pretenders to religion. But they had repented, and, therefore, they were fully forgiven, and were as much beloved by God as angels that have never sinned. Their repentance added greatly to the guilt of the Pharisees, for the very sight of these penitents ought to have convinced them of their own need of repentance.

But the proud have no feelings to vent at the feet of Jesus. There is no sin that hardens the heart so much as pride. Open sins, though they expose to shame and misery in this life, sometimes render men more willing to humble themselves before God. A liar, who blushes because of the lies he has told, will, perhaps, listen to the voice of mercy, while the proud truth-speaker rejects it, because he rests upon his integrity. Of all sins let us most beware of pride. It is Satan's first-born. It possesses the wonderful faculty of occupying the space of any other sin which is cast out of the heart. If intemperance be cast out, then pride swells and fills the room that intemperance occupied before. Often pride will arise and by its own strength cast out some other vice, in order that it may have more room to grow in, and more food to feed upon.

Most of all, pride dreads the entrance of the Son of God into the heart. Then it knows its reign will be at an end. How it bars and bolts the doors of the heart, against the rightful owner! Yet Christ has broken through even these bars. Saul of Tarsus was a proud Pharisee, when Jesus spoke to him from heaven; but he became as lowly as that penitent tax-collector, who said, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner."

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