

Handling The Truth With Integrity.

Mark 11:27-33.

Sunday morning, July 20,2008.

I. The Question.

A. The chief Priests, Scribes and Elders.

These were the members of the Sanhedrin; the highest Jewish court in the land. The Sanhedrin had lower courts in various cities throughout the land, but the supreme Sanhedrin sat in the temple buildings surrounding the Woman's Court of the temple complex.

B. The members of this court are described in terms of their function:

1. Chief Priests; meaning members of both present and former High Priestly families. They were mostly Sadducees.
2. Scribes; these were men that studied, interpreted, and taught the law in both temple and synagogue. They were mostly Pharisees.
3. Elders; Every city of any importance had its own body of ruling elders. The more prominent of these became members of the Sanhedrin. They were the

“lay

members” of the Sanhedrin.

4. The terms Pharisees and Sadducees refers to the theological affiliation of any of these members. The Pharisees were the conservatives; Sadducees the liberals.

C. The nature of the question: “By what authority are You doing these things?”

1. They were asking Him His credentials.
 - If He said He had none, He would lose respect with the people.
 - If He nevertheless considered himself authorized to do the things He did, then He was taking for Himself rights that belonged to God alone and was guilty of blasphemous behavior.
2. They did it to embarrass Him before the people.
3. They were pointing at “these things.”

No doubt they alluded to the things that recently occurred.

 - Accepting Messianic praise for Himself in the Triumphal Entry.
 - Cleansing the temple.
 - Teaching the people in the temple as an uneducated Galilean.
 - Doing signs and miracles with (as they assumed) demonic power.

II. The counter question.

“The baptism of John (the Baptist), was it from heaven or from men?”

A. “The baptism” stands for the whole of the ministry of John, and included his preaching. Baptism was the outstanding feature of his ministry.

B. Answering the Lord's question with integrity was to answer their own question because of what John had preached concerning the Lord.

1. John had spoken of the One mightier than him; whose sandal strap he was not worthy to loose. John 1:26,27.
2. John had identified the Lord as “the lamb of god that takes away the sin of the world.” John 1:29.
3. John baptized Him and saw the Spirit of God descending on the Lord, and he

testified saying “this is the Son of God.” John 1:32-34.

4. John had testified of the Lord that He would baptize, not with water, but with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Matt. 3:11.

III. A dishonest approach.

Their deliberation shows no love for the truth; no desire to know and obey it. Their only interest is that of personal advantage.

- A. If we say, from Heaven, He will say, why did you not believe him?
- B. If we say, from men, we are afraid of the crowds, for all believed John to have been a prophet indeed. They may even stone us Luke 20:6.
- C. Therefore we will say that we do not know.
- D. An honest answer would have been, “We do not want to say.”
Saying “we do not know” was a dishonest answer.

IV. A devastating outcome.

“Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

- A. Christ’s opponents did not see the truth because they did not want to see it.
- B. In matters of religion they pursued an agenda of personal advantage.
- C. In doing so they cut themselves off from God’s self-disclosure and gracious work in their hearts and lives.

Application:

The reason why so many people know so little about Jesus and the joy of the Christian life is that they do not seek the truth for the purpose of humbly loving it, and submitting to it.

1. Many study religion because they are curious and find it interesting. They have no interest in it beyond that. They operate from a self-serving agenda, and certainly would not want to be mastered by their religion. They want religious knowledge; not so much love and obedience.
2. Others study religion hoping to find certain religious sentiments in it; good feelings. They too serve a selfish agenda. They want sentiments, but not truth nor humble submission.
3. Still others have a sort of Pharisaical approach to religion. They want from it a code of conduct. Neither truth nor love are high priorities; just a code of conduct, the keeping of which, of course, leads to blessing, and it gives you something to boast in. This too is a self serving approach.

Growing in our Christian lives and walking close in fellowship with the Lord is conditioned on our humble submission to what He has already revealed of Himself to us.

“If anyone wills to do His will, He shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God, or whether I speak on My own authority.” John 7:17.