



TIME OF GRACE®

What if I Don't Agree With Jesus?

Study Notes

Summary

Authority. Jesus' enemies adored it. They refused to submit to Jesus' teaching, even when caught in their own duplicity. They missed finding true life because they refused to die to having the last word. Modern Americans face the same dilemma. Will Jesus be the Lord who gets the last word? Or will we cling to our plastic gavels and tell Jesus what to do?

- **Mark 11:27,28:** They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you authority to do this?"
- **Mark 11:29,30:** Jesus replied, "I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John's baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!"
- **Mark 11:31-33:** 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, 'Of human origin' . . ." (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.) So they answered Jesus, "We don't know." Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."
- Give up authority . . .
 1. because of the _____. (Luke 12:5: I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.)
 2. because of his _____. (John 10:18: No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.)

Points to Ponder

1. Which of Jesus' teachings rub you the wrong way? How have you dealt with those doubts in the past? How did today's message make you reconsider your attitude?
2. Read Romans 8:7,8. How does Paul describe the sinful nature/flesh that lives inside our hearts? Why is that important to remember when we question one of Jesus' teachings?
3. Meditate on Psalm 131 and summarize its meaning. How does knowing that "the LORD" is the special name of the God who is always faithful to his loving promises help explain the quiet trust that David had in God?
4. List five examples of God's love that you experienced this past week. How does his fatherly heart make it easier to trust in him with all your heart instead of leaning on your own understanding?

Homework for Next Week

Read 2 Corinthians 4:14-18.

"Those who have a saving interest in Christ must be willing to part with all for him, leave all to follow him. Whatever stands in opposition to Christ, or in competition with him for our love and service, we must cheerfully quit it, though ever so dear to us."

—Matthew Henry

Time of Grace Ministry
What if I Don't Agree With Jesus?
Mark 11: 27-33
October 31, 2021

Pastor Mike Novotny

Two thousand years ago, when Jesus came from heaven to earth, when God was walking among us, it was not the religious extremists that killed him, it was not the atheists that put him on the cross, it was not the worshipers of Zeus that found pitch forks and torches and called for his death, it was church people. It was prayer, praying, offering, giving, Bible reading church people.

Ever thought about that? That is crazy. That would be like Jesus coming to earth today, and he could have lunch with the leaders of ISIS and he would be fine, and he could have coffee with the President of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, and he would be fine, and then he comes to church, and we kill him. It makes me wonder what in the world would cause a person like you, people like us to kill God.

You know, I was paging through the Gospels, the biographies of Jesus in the Bible the other day, looking for an answer to that question, "What in the world would cause religious people, Bible reading people to kill God?" And, I think I came up with the answer. If I could boil all the arguments, all the tension, all the drama down to just one word, the word would be, "Authority." And, that is fascinating to me, because when I think about our culture today, our world today, there are few things that are greatly debated more than authority. Who is right, who is wrong, who gets the last word?

In fact, you know, I have found this chart that Google Books put together, and even use of the word, "Authority," since the word year 1800 has plummeted. It does not show up in books or publications and writings as much as it used to, and those of you who are a little bit older, you have experienced that trend, haven't you?

It used to be, "Mr. President," no matter who is in the office. Those days are long gone. It used to be the people on your block who were a little bit older, whether your parents or not, they could discipline you and tell you what to do. Those days are long gone. It used to be institutions that had power and authority, well those days are so long gone! The idea of outside authority has been toppled in the past few years. From Presidents and pastors, to politicians and parents, authority and truth has gone from out there to in here, to me, myself and I. The authority has changed hands so to speak.

But, today, I just want to vent, you know, about what is happening out there in the world, in culture. I am curious because the same thing happens in here. Sometimes if you actually read the

teachings of Jesus, you will find out that you do not always agree. In fact, I am not sure if I am to admit this as a pastor. Sometimes, when I read the things that Jesus taught, I want to say, "Really?" I mean, if you do more than like pick and choose the Hallmark verses out of the gospels, you will find out that Jesus taught some offensive things, and you want to say, "Jesus, really?"

I feel that way personally about what Jesus taught about divorce. You know, Jesus said, when God joins two people together into one flesh there are very, very, very few reasons for the rest of their life that they should ever end that marriage. And, as a pastor, I have been with people, I have wept with people, who maybe have not done those few things, but things have fallen apart and the affection is gone. To me, it just seems best if we would learn from the experience and move on. I want to say, "Jesus, are you sure?"

Or what Jesus said about forgiveness. I still know about that. Jesus told to story once that, if someone hurts you, if they sin against you, if they break your confidence, if they gossip about you, if they are just cruel to you, you should not just forgive them once or twice or seven times, Jesus said, "77 times 70 times 7 times." And then he went on to tell a story that if you do not, like if you pay those people back, even if they did deserve it, that God's going to show up one day, and torture you as punishment. And I want to say, "Really?" Like, Jesus, I have been there, and I have seen what sin does to people. You say that they should forgive so completely? Like, that is the only other option besides forgiving?

Really? Like, if you actually listen to my advice, and you decide to read the Bible and read all of it, you are going to find passages that offend you, and shock you, and you disagree with. In fact, some of you have been reading the Old Testament with me for the past few months in our church, and we have been there, haven't we? Where you just say, "Wow, that is supposed to be God's truth, and I am supposed to agree with that?"

And it could be a lot of things, it could be what Jesus taught about creation, that God created this world, that there was an Adam and an Eve, and every single human being has descended from them. It could be what he taught about gender, or about marriage, or about sexuality. It could be what he said about money, or words, or authority. It could be what he said about how you should treat your parents, or your enemies. There is going to be something that just bothers you so much, you are either going to want to skip it, or you are going to want to change it. So, what do you do when that happens? When you and Jesus both cannot have the last word? What do you do, and what do you think?

So, wrestle with that together, as we open our Bibles to Mark 11, and we are going to start today with verse 27. It says, "They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you authority to do this?" So, here these guys confront Jesus, and they want to talk about authority. And you want to know the men who is asking him the question? The chief priest, the teachers of the law, and the elders. Now, those are the three big groups that combine together to make the ultimate authority in the early church, called the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court. Although, the chief priest

included, like, the high priest, who was like, the pastor over all of Israel, any retired high priests, and prominent members of their family. They will kind of be like the, maybe the preaching pastor at a church, and the other pastors on staff, and the people who worked at the church. These are people who lived in Jerusalem, they worked at the temple, this was their home turf. Then to add to that, the teachers of the law.

Ever heard of the Pharisees before? The religious scholars of Jesus? They lived, they lived all over Israel, but like the valedictorians, the all-star Pharisees, were chosen to be teachers of the law, and they were the only Pharisees that lived down in Jerusalem. They were the brightest of the bright when it came to studying the scriptures. In our day, these would be like, the professors at a Bible college or seminary. And then there were the elders, who did not work at the church, and they did not preach and teach sermons, they were just like movers and shakers, and big names in the congregation. Ever known someone like that in the church? Like, they do not preach, they do not teach, but when they speak, you know, people listen to her, and people follow them, and their family's been at the church forever.

And you put these three groups together, the chief priest, like the pastors, the teachers. The teachers of the law, like the professors. And the elders, the movers and shakers, gather together, and they say, "Jesus, what right do you have? I mean, you show up in our church, in our city, where we are supposed to be the teachers, who gave you the authority to do this?" And it is actually a really great question. Because if you know much about the life of Jesus, you know that he has no right, from an earthly perspective, to do this. He is not a chief priest, he is not even a priest! He does not live in Jerusalem, and work in Jerusalem. He is from a carpentry shop in some hick town up north in Galilee. He is not even from the right family tribe where the priest came from. He is from the line of Judah, and not from Levi. He has no authority to do this! And he is not a teacher of the law.

I mean, the teachers of the law, the Pharisees, they spent their entire lives memorizing the Bible. They had the diplomas and the awards. Jesus, he shows up one day, he walks out of the carpentry shop with calluses on his hands, and he just starts preaching! He does not have a diploma; he does not have the credentials. Jesus was younger than I am when this happened. The elders of Israel had underwear that were older than Jesus, and so they asked him, "What? Who do you think you are? What gives you the right to come here and do this?" Honestly, it is a good question.

And, here is Jesus' answer. It says in verse 29, "Jesus replied, "I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John's baptism-was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!"" You know much about John? John the Baptist? He was Jesus' cousin, and John, if you would read the Bible, he was weird, okay? And if you had a weird cousin, anyone in the room want to admit to that? Hopefully, your cousin is not watching this online and thinking, "Hey, you were not talking about me, were you?"

The Bible said that John lived out in the wilderness, out into the woods, and ate bugs for breakfast, and he would not be caught dead wearing skinny jeans. And John, he was brash, and he was blunt, and he was brutal, and he would point this bony finger at people, and he would say,

"Repent! Confess your sins! Be baptized! And have your sins washed away! God knows you need it!" And like, the fire and brimstone would be enough as it was, but you see, John did not just say that to just the prostitutes and the greedy tax collectors. You know who he said that to? Church people. Right? The scholars would come after worship, and he would point a finger at them, and he says, "You. If you do not repent, if you do not change your ways, God in heaven, he is sharpening his axe, and he is going to cut you down, and throw you into the fires of hell!" That is what John said.

And Jesus said, "So, what do you think?" Was John from God? Should you have listened to him? Or was he just my crazy cousin? You see, in John's teaching, the line between good and bad, between good people and evil people was not drawn like we would want to draw it, at the heels of Hitler. It is not like, "Well, I am not a terrorist, and I have not done that to a little kid, so I must be a good person!" No, John, if you would read the Bible, he said that if you could just eat so much, that you just felt so full that you were sick and then you threw out the leftovers, and you do not give anything to the poor, John would say you are evil.

And he actually said, if you had two tunics, like if you had two outfits to wear, and there are some others who have so many clothes that the hangers do not fit, and you have to shove the drawers just to get them shut, and if you do not give anything to those who do not have a change of clothes in your community, you are evil. And John would say, if you are not content with your pay, if God's given you a job, and you just grumbled that you do not make enough money, you are evil. And if you do not pay what you owe to the government in taxes, you know, you want to fudge the numbers and stretch the truth and forget to report everything, that is evil. And he said, if you have a business and you try to get more from people than you really should, if you treat them in a way financially you would not want to be treated, you are evil. John would say, the hooker on the corner is evil, and the judgmental pastor is evil. He would say, your worst enemy, the most vile terrorist, your grandmother, and your best friend are all evil, and they need to repent, and if they do not, they will be separated from God for all eternity.

And so, Jesus' question for people like us, "What do you think?" What do you think about that? Was he crazy? Fire and brimstone? The old school forgetting about God, or was he right? Was he sent from God with God-given authority? Here is how they answered Jesus's question, verse 31. "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, 'Of human origin...' (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.) So they answered Jesus, "We do not know.""

Now, they put their big hats together, a not so Holy huddle, and they realized that they are stuck. Say that John was right, and they have to admit that they were wrong. That they abused their authority. That God was right, and they needed to change. But say that God was crazy, and they would lose their earthly authority, because people loved John and thought he was sent from God.

So, what do they do? They punt. They plead the fifth. They dodge the question. They refuse to admit that Jesus could actually be right, and they could be wrong. I could only imagine the expression on Jesus' face when he says, ""Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."" They realized that Jesus would not let them have the last word. And so, three days

later, on that Friday that we call good, they found nails and they murdered God. What a warm and fuzzy scripture. But it begs the question, since many of us are church people, what would we do? What do we do when Jesus flips us, and he pins us, and he corners us, and he will not let us dodge the question, and he says, "What do you think?" What do we do?

Maybe, we could picture it like this, let us imagine that this stool is the seat of authority, and whoever sits here gets the last word. And kind of, by nature, we all have an opinion about something, we all assume that we kind of know right and wrong. This comes when we are born in this position of authority. But then someone comes along, and they are carrying that book, and they claim that we might be wrong about something. It might be about our view of sexuality, or our view of marriage, or money, or words, or repentance, or how to treat someone who hurts us, or it could be about anything, and they say that Jesus is not cool if we agree to disagree. That Jesus has been sitting in that seat, and he would like it back. And, you find out, there is not quite enough room here for you and Jesus, only one person gets to sit here.

What do you do? You know the challenging part? When someone confronts you like that, they are probably going to be a lot like John. They are going to be weird. Maybe it happens when a kid is bold enough to talk to his parents about the way they use the family money. A kid who is actually reading the Bible and Jesus' love for the poor. And he says, "You know, dad, we are spending thousands of dollars on another family vacation, and I have never seen us give to those in need. And, we cannot go to church and pray, 'Give us our daily bread,' and then not care about the us! We cannot spend money like this!"

You know, it might be the grandkid, the friend who confronts racism, or sexism in their family, who says, "You know, grandpa, the way you talk about black people, Mexican people, immigrants, you make it sound like they are a mistake, and that God messed up. You cannot claim to follow God and care about his will and talk like that." What happens when two guys sit at the bar for a beer, and one of them says, "You know, hey man, I love you, but every time we get together, you vent about your boss, about your brother, how can you claim to love being forgiven by God, but you, it just seems like you do not want to forgive and give back what you have received."

You know, what happens in those moments? I will tell you what happens. You will know exactly why the church people murdered God. There will be something that appears in your heart, just like my heart, that will be so defensive, it will reach for any weapon it can find to silence that voice so it does not confront us again. But today, I want to ask you, no, I want to beg you, to give this seat up to Jesus. And not just because of the logic of it, that he is God and we are not, that he might, maybe, in his eternal existence, have figured things out better than we have. Not just the logic, I am going to give you two reasons why when you disagree with him, why when it seems wrong, it does not seem right, and someone confronts you for your lifestyle, that you should give up the seat of authority and willingly die to the last word.

These two reasons are so important, I want you to write them down. Here is the first one. Because of the law. Out of your own self-interest, to not submit to Jesus' authority is spiritual suicide. But you know that from an earthly perspective, right?

If I was driving in my car, and I am smoking meth, and I got a 40, and a paper bag in my hand, and I am driving with my knees and taking selfies at the same time, and I get pulled over, I cannot say to the officer, "Well, you know, agree to disagree! You know, that is your law, but I have my law! This might be the truth in the state of Wisconsin, but I have my truth in my heart!" You think that is going to work? I think it can, but the law is over me, and I live under it, whether I accept that in the moment or not.

So, so, what do you think happens with God? He said, "I will show you whom you should fear. Fear him, who after your body has been killed has authority to throw you into hell." Yes, I tell you fear him. "Come on Jesus, eternity is a long time, and I am coming back to judge the living and the dead. When I come back, do you want to be clinging to the seat? Do you really want to tell me what I want is not having you to be my Lord and My God?" Jesus said, "You do not want that." For the sake of the law, for the sake of eternity, do not be that stubborn, do not let your own opinion get in the way of the eternal happiness that I want to give you.

But, the second reason I think is even better. It is not just because of the law; it is because of his love. If it is one thing that can change your mind, that can get you to bow your knee and submit to Jesus, even when he seems crazy, is his love.

I think about my daughter. A couple weeks ago, I took my eldest daughter, Brooklyn, on a daddy-daughter date, and I took a few pictures to show you. We put on our sweats, and we pumped up an old basketball, we went to the park, we parked the van, and we ran to like the best chocolate shop in town, and we raced and ran a half mile together, you know, first one to touch that big chocolate bar gets that first bite, and we gorged on the free samples, and we actually ordered our own, like, make-your-own customized chocolate bar. Well, Brooklyn, what did we have? We had dark chocolate, and caramel, and sea-salt, and Oreos, and extra caramel! And we packaged it up, and we ran back to the van, and I got in the driver's seat, and she buckled in and waited in the back, and do you know who drove the whole way home? Do you know who decided every seat, every turn, do you know who sat in the driver's seat with all authority? Me. And do you know the expression I saw on her face when she sat in the backseat under my authority? She smiled. Why? Because the one who got the last word about our journey was a guy who loved her.

So, I could ask, "What do you know about Jesus?" Is he just a guy who wants to crush you with his authority? "I am God, you are not. Deal with it?" No. This is a great passage. Jesus said, let me show you one more passage today. He said in John 10, "No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

Three days, after the conflict, he came in front of those same men, the Jewish Supreme Court, except this time, there was no judo flip. This time, there was no miracle. Jesus just sat there, and he took it, he was ripped off his throne, and was nailed to a cross, you know why? So, that you could be loved for all eternity. So, God's love would be so deep, and so high, and so strong that we would never get to the bottom of it. So that, whatever mess you brought into this church

today, no matter what addiction and what struggle, no matter how many times you have doubted God, or questioned God, that because of Jesus Christ, God is not holding it over your head!

Instead, there is this amazing grace, there is this unconditional love so that you and I can say, "God does not just put up with us! God loves us! The God of heaven and earth delights in us!" Out of all the people on planet earth, he chose to accept and approve of me. That is what Jesus did and that is why he did it.

And so, are there things I do not get? All the time. Are there times I want to say, "Jesus really?" All the time. But then I remember the Jesus I am talking to, and you should too. A God who gave up everything, so that you can have everything. And so, we as the church are saying, "I follow you, Jesus, if I have to give up what I think is right, if I have to step off of this seat, because with you, there is joy everlasting, and there is freedom for my soul."

Listen, you might have questions, and you might have doubts, but here is what I can tell you. Get to know Jesus, because when you find out that he is the source of life, and joy, and peace, and happiness, you will give up everything for him, even the last word. So, sit in the back seat, and enjoy the ride!

Let us pray.

Jesus, if we do not, if we do not see the expression on your face, and the scars in your hands, the things of this life will seem so much better. And so, we ask you today for faith. That you would send the Holy Spirit into our hearts that we could grasp how wide, and high, and long, and deep is the love that you have for us right now.

God, some of us have struggled with sexual sin, and some of us with bitter hearts. Some of us have taught and believed false things, some of us have strayed from you and pursued things of this life, and yet, and yet what you did is so sufficient. Your grace is amazing, and it saves wretches like us.

And so, we are so grateful, God. And we want that gospel to overwhelm our hearts. I pray especially heavenly Father, for those here who are doubting. Who struggle with what you taught about marriage or divorce, or creation, or forgiveness. I pray God, that you will help them see that, you are okay with the doubts, and we do not have to figure that out to approach you, and to follow you, and in your presence, we will find something that is so much bigger than our questions.

Give us that kind of faith God so that we can stand by every single word that you taught. That we can be a faithful church, and a faithful people that does not give into culture, but believes you are God, and you are good. And so, we pray for that kind of faith that would be among us, and in us, and you would work powerfully through us. We pray all these things in Jesus' name, and all God's people who agreed, join their voices and they say, amen. Amen!