

Mk. 11:27-12:12 “By What Authority?”

For the Children: Boys and girls often get annoyed when someone tries to act like they're the boss, even though they have no more authority than anyone else. In any group of young people, there's usually someone who wants to take control. Sometimes, others in the group don't like that – especially if they think they should be in charge. The Jewish leaders saw the Lord Jesus acting like He was in charge. It made them very angry. What they wouldn't accept was that He *is* in charge – of everything! He is God's Beloved Son. He is the Chief Cornerstone – the most important stone in ancient buildings. Those who reject His authority will be judged. **Questions:** How were the leaders like the vine-growers in the parable? How should we apply this to our lives? In what ways do you go against Jesus' authority?

Introduction:

First Point: A Question About Authority

- A Question Provoked: The cleansing of the Temple and the impression the Lord was making on the crowd provoked the Jewish leaders to challenge the Lord's authority – as they had before. They objected to the Lord acting like a King, like He owned the Temple.
- A Question of All the Leaders: The 3 main categories of leadership in the Sanhedrin were represented – chief priests, scribes and elders. This shows that almost the entire leadership was against Jesus.
- Answering with a Question: They question the source of His authority. Though the Lord had been teaching for some time that His authority came from His heavenly Father, now was the time to show up the leaders' dishonesty. Their question was not an honest question. So the Lord answers with His own question, to expose their dishonesty.
- The Lord's Question: The Lord asks the leaders whether John's baptism was from God or men. As they realize, if they say it was from God, the Lord will ask why they didn't listen to John; if they say it was from men, the crowds may turn against them – since the people recognized that John was a true prophet. Their reply, “We don't know” was dishonest: they knew very well that they had rejected John. Since Jesus comes with the same authority and the same message – though with more emphasis on salvation – they also have an opinion on His authority. Their question is not honest.

Second Point: The Answer to the Question About Authority

- Answering with a Parable: Once the Lord had exposed the leaders' dishonesty, He proceeded to answer their original question – first, in an indirect manner, the Parable of the Wicked Vine-growers (12:1-12). The background lies in Is. 5:1-7, where God rebukes Israel for being like a vineyard producing only worthless grapes. In Mt. 12, however, the focus is on the worthless leaders. They are like wicked tenant-farmers, who mistreat and kill the owner's servants when they are sent to collect the produce. They even reject the authority of the owner's beloved son, kill him, and shamefully throw the corpse over the wall. Israel and her leaders have a long history of killing God's prophets (Lk. 11:47-52) and are now about to kill His Beloved Son. This parable clearly indicates Jesus' authority as God's Beloved Son.
- An Answer Against the Leaders: The parable also clearly condemns the leaders. They must have been shocked to hear this comment on their “secret” plans to kill Christ. The parable warns that the Owner, God, will judge them (the wicked vine-growers) for their murderous actions and rejection of His authority.
- A More Direct Answer: The quote from Ps. 118:22-23 gives an even more direct answer to their question about Jesus' authority. He is the Chief Cornerstone. Initially, He would be rejected by the “builders,” but He would be exalted, and crush all opposition. Previously, the parables were designed to prevent the wicked from understanding (Mk. 4:11-12). But now the time had come for open confrontation. The meaning of this parable is clear, and it provokes the leaders further to send Jesus to the cross.
- An Answer for Us: We also must grapple with this question of Jesus' authority. For He has the right to tell us what to believe and what to do. His authority, as the Beloved Son sent by God, to be the Chief Cornerstone, ought to be “marvelous in our eyes.”

Conclusion