

Mark

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Preacher: Crowter, Harold (1923-2011)

- [0 : 00] Enjoy heavenly things from 512 to 132. The chapter that we've read, that is the 11th chapter in the Gospel by Mark.
- And I will read by way of text verses 27 to 30. That section of the chapter, verse 27 down to verse 30.
- And they came again to Jerusalem. And as he was walking in the temple, there came to him the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.
- And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority to do these things?
- And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question and answer me. And I will tell you by what authority I do these things.
- [1 : 30] The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men? Answer me. The Lord, the Spirit has caused this narrative to be written in the three Gospels.
- Matthew, Mark and Luke. And I've jotted down on this piece of paper, through bad memory, the three references.
- First of all, Matthew 21, verses 23 to 27. Then this section in Mark that we've read by way of text. And then we have in Luke, chapter 20, verses 1 to 8.
- Now, we may say, why is the Holy Spirit inspiring the same narrative to be repeated by the three penmen, Matthew, Mark and Luke, when surely one record will suffice?
- Well, my friends, I know that all Scripture has an authority. And it only needs to be written once in the Word, as it were, to command our attention, if we really love the Bible and seek instruction from its page.
- [3 : 09] But I do believe that we can assess to a degree the importance of that happening in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ as each of these penmen, Matthew, Mark and Luke, are constrained of the Holy Spirit to record that particular narrative or that particular instance in the life of Jesus Christ.
- So, I'm addressing this subject this morning conscious that we have before us a solemnity, shall I say, a repeated solemnity because of the three records of the same incident in these Gospels.
- Now, the Lord came again to Jerusalem. And how often He came to Jerusalem.
- It seemed a very centre of His teaching to a great degree.
- And we know, do we not, that in the issue of His pilgrimage here upon earth and the great work that He came from heaven to accomplish in the redemption of His people, Jerusalem was the city that figures so prominently in the record.
- [4 : 46] Although He was not crucified in Jerusalem, He was crucified outside of Jerusalem. I'm just going to put this point to you as I've often derived some comfort from it.
- Lepers were not allowed in the city. But none could stop lepers from coming to Calvary, which was outside of the gate of Jerusalem.

And as leprosy is a type of sin, oh, my friends, there is access to sinners at Calvary. The Lord Jesus Christ died to save not only those that were in the city, but those that were banished from the city because of the contagion which they possessed in that awful disease of leprosy.

So, there it is. The Lord came again into the temple. And as they came again to Jerusalem, and as He was walking in the temple, there come to Him the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

We might say the prominent ecclesiastics of the day, also accompanied by some of those who doubtless were important personalities in the city of Jerusalem.

[6 : 21] The priests, the scribes, and the elders. Here the Lord was confronted with the prominent personalities in Jerusalem at that particular time.

And they say unto Him, By what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority to do these things? You may say, Well, surely they were possessed of authority.

They had a great influence exercising their authority among the Jews. And here is one that comes into the midst and speaks with authority and does things which carry the hallmark of authority.

So, really for them, it is a question that affects them very keenly and very closely. Because they administer an authority in the church, in the temple, and in religious circles.

They also exercise an authority among the common people. These are those who have an authority.

[7 : 47] And here is one. And they recognize that He has a great influence and that He is doing various things and speaking forth various words that seem so authoritative in the nature of them.

Because, my friends, Jesus Christ spoke with authority. Not only to mankind, but also to devils and also to those that were outside of the region of natural human authority.

Why, He said, To the dead, Arise! And the dead responded. He got authority in so many ways that were unique to His personality because He was God-man.

Emmanuel God with us. And He could do things and exercise authority in areas that were particularly the Godhead in our Lord Jesus Christ.

As opposed, as it were, to the manhood which He spoke in very well-known ways to the people He addressed.

[9 : 10] Well now, here we have these men of authority questioning the right of Christ to do what He was doing and to say what He was saying.

And oh, my friends, haven't we all that spirit within us that is contrary to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it is only the grace of God that can give to us a humble recognition of His absolute right as Lord of all.

And my friends, it's a great token for God if you can say, Lord, Lord, and seek to submit to His authority whatever His will will unfold in your life, in your experience.

Now, these people wanted to know because it was somewhat of an undermining fact that Christ was exercising an authority without their permission.

[10 : 32] And it is a fact that Christ doesn't wait for human permission to do what He has done, what He is doing and will continue to do.

My friends, He is by divine authority Lord of all, Lord of all. all things were created by Him and for Him and there was nothing created but what was consistent with His creative Lordship in the beginning.

And He's gone on equipped with the same authority to maintain the universe and bring forth His will in every detail of its history.

Well now, these people obviously were anxious because it seemed to be somewhat of an affront to their legal position and the priests and that would think their lawful position within the temple.

But they asked the question and Jesus answers and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question and answer me and I will tell you what authority by what authority I do these things.

[12 : 13] Look, I'm going to put a question to you and if you answer my question then I'll tell you. I'll tell you the answer to your question that you've put to me.

It was fair enough wasn't it? Fair enough that Christ was ready to reveal to them or to expound to them the ground of His authority if only they will answer His question in respect of the baptism of John the Baptist.

the baptism of John was it from heaven or of men. Now, you remember the history of John Baptist?

You remember that he was the first Baptist so to speak as he came the herald of Jesus Christ the forerunner of the Son of God. He came into the world in a most remarkable way.

The child leapt in the bosom of Elizabeth, John Baptist's mother, before ever Christ was manifested in the flesh.

[13 : 33] When Mary, the mother of Christ, came into the company of Elizabeth, Elizabeth said, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

The very presence of Christ in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Ghost. And my friends, it seems as we read carefully the teaching of Scripture in that particular, that John Baptist was born again of the Spirit in the womb of his mother before he was naturally born in the flesh.

A very remarkable thing, a very remarkable character. But nevertheless, he comes forth with a special authority, a special commission.

He was to be the forerunner of the Lord in the earth. And you remember how he was baptizing at the River Jordan, and it says all Jerusalem and Judea went out to his baptism.

There was a tremendous outpouring of the Spirit in regard to the work God was giving John the Baptist to accomplish.

[15 : 02] and he did it by divine authority beyond question. Who else could gather such a company?

Who else could influence the minds of such people at that particular juncture in the history of Israel? who could bring such a thing to pass that the masses, so to speak, were willing to submit to the exercise and act of baptism in the River Jordan by this man who seems disinterested.

Disinterested in the common interests of life. Why? He was girded about with a leather girdle and he ate locusts and wild honey.

John was a remarkable character who seems so heavenly minded as it were to be almost independent of the common necessities of life.

But he was sanctified by the Spirit of God and sent forth to do a work, a work unique to himself, according to the prophetic scriptures of the Old Testament and the faithful record we have of his activities in the New.

[16 : 33] Well now, these people say, ask the question, the baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men?

he was doing a strange work, something, an ordinance as it were, was now established, that had not been established through the ages before.

that there seems to be associated with the work John is doing, a peculiar power that influences the hearts and minds of people to obedience in this direction.

Isn't it wonderful when we look back historically over the world to a remarkable thing, how the all sufficiency of God, the authority from heaven of the Most High, can bring wonderful things, almost, I want to use this cautiously, unique happenings that have the hallmark of heaven.

There's no other explanation for what has been done, but the Lord himself, by divine authority communicated, has caused men and women in certain instances to do works that can have originated from no other quarter but heaven itself.

[18 : 40] I think of the wonderful time when Ahab and Jezebel were about and Ahab was obviously seeking the life of Elijah and he was following Elijah from nation to nation, as it were, exercising his power to track him down and he was going to get rid of that personality at all costs.

And Elijah meets Ahab and they agree, as it were, that the prophets of Baal and the prophets of Baal shall assemble at a certain point and make their sacrifices and Elijah, on the other hand, should, in the name of God, he would exercise his authority in the offering of sacrifices and the calling down from heaven of fire.

And the sacrifice that was burnt by the fire from heaven was obviously that which belonged to the true God and the true religion.

Well then, you remember, I hope most of you are so conversant with the record of scripture that you can run along with me in my insufficient account of that matter, but there the prophets of Baal, they called on their God to come down and consume that beast that they have slain that lay on the altar.

There was no response. There was no, nothing was done. My friends, they were trying to do by men what only can be done by God.

[20 : 40] And that is the spirit, really, behind the text this morning, isn't it? the baptism of John, was it from heaven? Or was it of men?

I'm going to say this, and it's a very solemn, solemn searching statement to face. I face it myself, and I want you to face it, as the Lord may help you.

There's no religion that is of any real value, and I'm looking universally on the whole religions of the universe, and I don't mind what support they may get in holding countries, as it were, under their grasp, and rulers, or dictating, according to their, the dictates of their, their religion.

There's no real religion in the world but that of God. It's come from heaven. It's come from heaven.

my friends, if you've got a religion, I ask you the question, is it from heaven?

[22 : 13] Is it from heaven? You didn't get it from your dad, you didn't get it from your mother, they might have been godly people, but they can't give you, they can't give you a saving religion. You say, well I've been to church and chapel all my life.

Churches and chapels can't give you a saving religion. My friends, there's only one source of real religion. Heaven! Heaven!

Heaven! Doesn't that put the death nail to a lot of religion that's followed in the universe? Doesn't it put within our own country?

Doesn't it put the axe to the root of the tree? The people will follow, as it were, a form within the abilities of men and think that they've got a religion that will save them.

I say the religion of works by men is of no value. It hasn't got any purpose in it that will land that sort soul in glory.

[23 : 24] By grace you say through faith that not of yourselves it is the gift of God not of man lest any man should boast.

Oh, have we got a religion from heaven? man? Well now, the baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men?

If you and I have been baptized properly, if you and I have, as it were, a place in the church of God by divine authority through following the Lord, in the ordinance of believers baptism, I say our baptism was of heaven.

It wasn't that we at some given point wanted to belong to the church and therefore we submitted our names and expected the powers that be within the fellowship to accept an encouragement in our joining and we all go through the whole procedure on a fleshly level.

My friends, John's baptism, it had the seal of heaven when he was coming up out of the water, the heavens opened.

[24 : 52] This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased, says God. God was present. What a mercy if we can look back on our own baptisms and realize that the hand of God was in it.

The hand of God was in it. The constraining influence of love was in it. Love to the Lord. Love to the Lord.

love to my friends, you can't beget a spirit of love in your heart with all your efforts by nature. That's the grace of love and it comes down from above.

The love of Christ constrains us and we're compelled to run in the way of his commandments as he enlarges our hearts. John's baptism was a time of a spiritual outpouring and it was sealed as it were by the presence of Jesus Christ himself and sealed by the fact that he submitted himself into the hands of John.

Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness he says against the protest of John that he was an unworthy character to baptize his Lord.

[26 : 21] Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness and they went down into the water and John baptized him and he gives to us an example as to the heavenly benefit of the constraints of love when we're ready to as it were expose ourselves or exhibit the fact that Christ is our hope Christ is our salvation.

Everything that is of a living nature is in Christ. We're dead and buried to all hope in ourselves and anything of a temporary nature.

Well now the baptism of John was it from heaven or of men? Some years ago I was reading I think it was John Owen and John Owen said this touchstone can be applied to everything within the church.

Everything. That which glorifies God in the church is from heaven. It's from heaven. It has the seal of heaven upon it.

It's consistent with the revelation of heaven that God has given to us in his word. It is consistent as it were with those ways God has ordained his worship.

[28 : 05] As I've suggested to you, all real religion is from heaven. All real worship is from heaven as well as to heaven.

Everything, everything really should carry this hallmark within the church. It's from heaven. It's from heaven.

And God will bless that which originated in himself and was brought down to men by the power and influence of his spirit and his word.

Now, the baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men? There's a lot that goes on in the confines of Christianity, that is professed Christianity, that is of men, men.

I'm going to touch upon one or two points. I was just wondering, I don't want to overrun my time, but just take the preachers.

[29 : 30] Just take the preachers. What preaching can we expect to receive God's blessing?
that which is of heaven, of heaven. Now, my friends, there's a readiness in our day.

Men are blessed of natural abilities, and they can study a subject, and they become theologians, and they think that the preaching of the word is a very suitable occupation to their temperament and their talents, and they decide they're going to be preachers.

What result do you expect from all their labors? Those that God sanctifies and puts into the ministry, God calls with an effectual calling.

They're separated by God for God's use in this particular function religion, in their day and generation. And my friends, you can take all your colleges, you can take all the advantages, so to speak, of a public occupation and social activity that seems essentially to be quite a preeminent in the life of so-called preachers.

[31 : 27] I say, but unless they have this authority from heaven, they are sounding brass and tinkling signals.

You know, when I come on these sort of lines of teaching, I almost tremble lest I'm here and shouldn't be here.

But I'm not going to, I'm not going to, as it were, depart from the principle to ease my own, well, to modify my own unease.

look, ministers are called of God. They're equipped of God.

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, thou shall go to all to whom I send thee, and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak.

[32 : 43] it's of divine origin. It's a work of heaven. And my friends, there's no, there's no man-made substitute for the authority of the true preaching of the word.

I remember in my youth at Coventry, we had a dear old man come to preach. He was a lovely looking man.

He had white whiskers around his chin, as well as white hair, he looked the picture of cleanliness, although by profession he was a Wiltshire, I think I'm right in saying Wiltshire, roadman, road sweeper, Charles James is name.

He used to come to Coventry when I was a lad, six times a year, and somebody said to him on one occasion about him ministering, and he made the confession that he didn't know much of the king's English, but within the ability God gave to him, he became a great minister of Jesus Christ, in my experience, not only talking of a personal knowledge of these things, people who did that dear man, and I may have mentioned this to you before, because it made a great impression on my own memory, he went to the chapel of Swindon to preach, which was reasonably local to where he lived, and he preached a sermon, and oh, he was so distressed, so distressed, he went home, he went into bed, and his dear wife, she couldn't, she couldn't sleep, because he was so restless, he was, he was twisting and turning and turning and twisting, in the end she said to him, she said,

Charles, she said, I know what's wrong with you, you've upset the devil tonight, he couldn't accept that, he just made a bad job of preaching, but the outcome was, I think I'm right in saying, the outcome was that seven people from that sermon were brought to join the church at Swindon, he'd upset the devil all right, and my friends, if the Lord took work, the devil's never very far away, but he's a man that could hardly speak the king's English, he was broken, but he was powerful, it had the authority of God, it entered not just into your ears, but as God the Holy Spirit accompanied it, he went into your heart, it wasn't of men, heaven, it was of heaven, and that's the ministry we want, that's the ministry we want in the churches, we don't want men clambering up pulpit steps, because they think it's a fine public position to occupy, and fairly easy to get through the week between the Sundays, my friends, there's no harder labour

[36 : 40] I know, under the sun than the preaching of the gospel, but nevertheless, sent of God, God strengthens, God directs, God controls, thou shalt go to all that I ordain in the preaching of the gospel, he says to Jeremiah, you're not your own, I've got a work for you to do, and you'll do it, where I determine, and you'll say what I lay upon your heart to speak, nor the conflict, why did I say that, fancy me saying such a thing as that, and the old devil gets to work and he brings it all into question, but my friends, so often the sermon we get most tried about is the sermon that seems to bring forth the most fruit in the issue, because it came from heaven, it came from heaven, well now, the baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men?

It was from heaven, it was from heaven, and the preaching of the gospel that's effectual to the salvation of immortal souls is a heavenly gift, and my friends, we do need in the churches, that gift to be exercised by the Lord in sending forth laborers into his harvest, in extending, as it were, the walls of Zion to cover the great need that obtains of a living ministry to quicken and maintain living souls.

of the people. Now, I'll come to the offices of the church. In Timothy, we have quite explicit directions as to deacons, deacons, and also, the wives' influence is so strong that there's a passage in Timothy with regard to deacons' wives as well as ministers' wives, because all these things under God have their influence upon the exercise of the office to which they're called.

Now, where do deacons come from? A good deacon to a church is a great asset.

I was brought up in a church at Coventry where we had excellent deacons. In my youth, dear old Mr.

[39 : 38] Ellsworth, dear old Mr. Negus, dear old Mr. Burton, they were giants in office and they guided the church as the Lord gave them wisdom and we enjoyed much prosperity.

Now, how are you going to vote your deacons in? Oh, he's a nice fellow. He's a nice fellow. You know, he's very conscientious.

Look how he exercises himself with regard to natural affairs. My friends, be careful.

Be careful. Ask the Lord that from heaven you may have your guidance in the appointment of the officers of the church because church officers have a tremendous influence on the course of the affairs of the church.

And those of you that may be in the church remember that there is such a thing as ministerial authority and there's such a thing as the authority of heaven given to deacons.

[41 : 14] That is, as it were, the weight of and strength of God benefiting a church and congregation when those in charge are men that truly fear God and wish to do right at every turn according to the will of God for the benefit of the community.

This is a great question isn't it? The baptism of John was it from heaven or of men? Now, if it's of men as far as I'm concerned within the church it's of little force.

It's of little force. I'm ready to dismiss what men have brought to bear I'm ready to dismiss it. Look, Christ is the head of all things to the church, not some things, all things to the church.

I want to know what authority under Christ people have for doing what they're doing and exercising the influence that they're exercising.

Have they divine authority for their function? If they haven't, well, I don't want to know. I don't want to know. It's a great question, it's a searching question, because we're confronted from time to time with certain things which have a professed authority, authority.

[43 : 03] But is that authority from God or is it from men? I ask you to bring anything that is exercising and worrying your mind, I ask you to bring it to this touchstone because this touchstone was the burden that the Lord laid upon my spirit when I was confronted with my commitment to come to Jireh today.

Is it of men? Is it of God? Is it of God? If it's of God, my friend, submit to it, accept it, embrace it, follow it.

The Lord never leads you wrong. The Lord never leads you wrong. But men are fallible. Men are fallible. And if the origin and rise of anything has, is beginning in men, it's not worth anything.

Really. Not worth anything. But if it's of God, God has nothing in his mind toward his church, but will prosper it, will bring forth his glory in the midst of it.

Now I'm going to say it. I'll leave the question with you. The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men? Answer me.

[44 : 35] And they reasoned with themselves, saying, if we shall say from heaven, he will say, why then did ye not believe him? But if we shall say of men, they feared the people, for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed.

And they answered and said unto Jesus, we cannot tell. They wouldn't face up to it. They knew in their heart that John's ministry and John's baptism was supernatural.

They knew that that man had had a unique influence in Jerusalem and round about, that they don't acknowledge him.

They don't acknowledge him, because it would have shown up their own thoughts and their own failings. And my friends, sometimes pride will prevent us from owning the truth.

Well, I'm going to leave the subject there. May the Lord sanctify and use his word. for our instruction. Oh, let us seek to know more of heaven and heavenly things.

[45 : 54] Then, I believe, we shall prosper. Amen. Amen. We connect to the last Lord's day for the church fund amounted to £130 and for the jire of £20.

The Lord will be a prayer meeting on Friday evening. And Mr. H. Mercer is engaged to preach here next Lord's day. Church members are reminded of a quarterly church meeting to take place, God willing, tomorrow.

It commenced at 7. 3. Let us close with him 635 to 767. The body the church ever stood in Christ their mysterious man.

To save them he shed his own blood and they from his fullness are fed. And 635 July 4th to 750 and the 17ingo nombre five to 700 and 60 925 to 767.

His England is coming in to 17 16 17 first Thank you.

[47 : 59] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.