

Jesus' Final Exams

Exam #1: By What Authority Do You Do These Things?

Mark 11:27-12:12

I. Jesus' Final Exams

A. Overview of Mark 11:27-13:2

1. Final Exams
 - a. Detailed review of expectations
 - b. Determine educational competence and fitness for graduation
2. Jesus faces a series of challenges much like final exams and then offers what looks a little like an oral defense of His thesis
 - a. Exam Challenges
 - (1) Challenge to His authority
 - (2) Challenge to His loyalty
 - (3) Challenge to His theology
 - (4) Challenge to His priority
 - b. Teachings in the Temple

B. Root Question (The Gospel Thesis): Is Jesus the Christ, the Son of God?

1. If so, then what should we expect of Him in these last days of His life?
 - a. We would expect a great victory and the commencement of the kingdom
 - b. But first we encounter the unexpected: a trial, a torture, a humiliation, a cross, a cry, a death, and tomb
 - c. But then the victory
 - (1) Yet,
 - (a) a victory over death
 - (b) a victory over sin and guilt
 - (c) a victory over fear
 - (2) Still needs to be worked out in the everyday lives of God's people
 - (a) Jesus is the Christ of theology
 - (b) Jesus is the Christ of experience
2. If Jesus proves to be the Christ, then
 - a. How should we respond to Him?
 - b. How should we respond to the circumstances of life?

II. Exam Question #1: By what authority do you do these things?

A. The Examiners: The Sanhedrin

1. Composed of the chief priests, scribes, and elders
2. Rulers of the people
3. "The Authorities"
 - a. They are the interpreters and teachers of the Law
 - b. They are the primary keepers of the Law
 - c. They are the authorized managers of the Temple
 - d. They present themselves
 - (1) As the governing authority

- (2) And as NOT having given Jesus authority to overturn tables, drive out vendors, and block traffic

B. The Question: What Authority

1. They ask an important question: “By what authority do you do these things?”
 - a. Jesus, in the temple, has faced this question before
 - b. **Luke 2:41-50**
 - (1) Family makes the annual trek to Jerusalem for Passover
 - (2) Age 12: Jesus goes missing
 - (3) Family finds Him in the temple
 - (a) v. 46 They find Him “sitting among the teachers”
 - i) Listening to them
 - ii) Asking them questions
 - iii) Everyone is amazed at his understanding and answers
 - (b) Mary asks Jesus:
 - i) “Son, why have you treated us so?”
 - ii) “By what authority have you done these things?”
 - (4) Jesus answers, “Did you not know I must be in my Father’s house?”
 - (a) This is my place
 - (b) This is where I belong
 - (c) This is where my work must be done
 - (d) This is where my life purpose is accomplished
 - (e) This is where I fulfill my destiny and complete my Father’s will
2. **It is an important question no matter who asks it (mother, rulers, or us) or for what reason, because Jesus’ answer will always point to the Father and His relationship to God!**
 - a. “Authority”
 - (1) Definition
 - (a) The prerogative to rule or govern others
 - (b) The right to regulate and control the activities of one or more individuals
 - (2) What authority does Jesus have?
 - (a) Authority of the Incarnation -
 - i) God in flesh
 - ii) **John 1:1-3** “. . . and the Word was God”
 - iii) Sources of Authority
 - a) Assigned (Sanhedrin)
 - b) Originating (God)
 - (b) Authority of the Son
 - i) **John 5:27 (ESV)** *And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he*

is the Son of Man.

ii) Authorized to complete a specific mission in relation to God and man

(c) Authority of the Christ

i) **John 10:17-18 (ESV)** ¹⁷ *For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.*”

ii) God gives the Jesus the authority of the Christ, the authority to rescue sinners from their sin with His own life!

(d) Authority of the King

i) **Ephesians 1:19-23 (ESV)** ¹⁹ *and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

ii) To be exalted over all authorities in creation means to be exalted to the place and power and authority of God Himself

3. Why point us to the authority of Jesus?

a. Obvious: Since Christ has and is the authority of God to accomplish God’s purpose in the world, we need to know and submit to that authority.

b. Less obvious: The authority invested in Jesus serves as a mark of His divinity

(1) Marks of Deity

(a) Pre-existence

(b) Authority

(c) Foreknowledge

(d) Lordship

(e) Preeminence

(f) Dominion

- (g) Exaltation
- (2) These give conclusive evidence that Jesus of Nazareth is not
 - (a) just another nice guy,
 - (b) not just another good, even amazing teacher,
 - (c) not just a worthwhile example to be followed in serving others and making a difference in the world
- (3) **Jesus is God come in the flesh to Whom faith, honor, worship, devotion, and obedience are rightly owed!**
- c. Do you know what that means?
 - (1) All the authority Jesus has to do what He did in the temple, in that moment of time, he has at any time and at any place and in any life
 - (a) He has the authority of Creator in your life
 - (b) He has the authority of Savior in your life
 - (c) He has the authority of Judge in your life
 - (d) He has the authority of the One among us Who most truly belongs in His Father's house!
 - (2) Too much we think of Jesus as merely a good ol' buddy in heaven who will be satisfied with whatever crumbs of faith and obedience we toss His direction
 - (a) The leftovers of our time
 - (b) The indifference of our spirit
 - (c) The absence of our efforts
 - (d) The selfishness of our worship
 - (3) Let us not forget who He truly is and what authority He truly has.
 - (4) Let us not treat Him as the tenants treated the Son in the parable with which Jesus answers this exam question.

C. The Answer: A Parable

1. **Isaiah 5:1-7 (ESV)** ¹ *Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. ² He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. ³ And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. ⁴ What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? ⁵ And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. ⁶ I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briars and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. ⁷ For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for*

righteousness, but behold, an outcry!

2. This is why the men of the Sanhedrin knew they were the subject of Jesus' parable and why they were angry.
 - a. Jesus speaks of their judgment, condemnation, and ruin because of how they, the tenants of the Lord's vineyard have treated the prophets and now the Son Himself.
 - b. The question for us is simple:
 - (1) The Son of God has come to us as the Christ, the anointed and appointed representative of God
 - (2) **What will you do with Him?**
 - (a) Will you put your faith in Him, love Him, honor Him, serve Him?
 - (b) Will you, as so many before, reject Him, turn Him away, continue living your own way, on your own terms, refusing His authority in your life?
 - (c) Will you yield or will you, as the Sanhedrin did that day, go away devising plans to rid yourself of Jesus' annoying call to faith and obedience?
 - (d) Will you believe and receive grace and mercy, the forgiveness of sin and the impartation of new life?
 - (e) Or will you face the wrath and judgment of God, wrapping yourself in your own pride and arrogance and guilt?
 - (3) **This is not only a question of salvation and conversion today:**
 - (a) It is a question for those who claim to follow Jesus.
 - (b) **From this moment forward, being informed of the divine authority of Jesus, how will you respond.**
 - i) Will you continue to treat Jesus like a business partner who owns a mere 49% share in your life?
 - ii) Will you continue to consider Jesus an equal with Whom you can negotiate your obedience?
 - iii) Or will you bow your heart and life and will, surrendering your self-determining tendencies to His divine authority?

III. A Personal Exam

A. In the end, this is not so much a final exam for Jesus as it is a test for us.

1. Jesus is the authorized Christ, the Son of God.
2. What will you do, now that you know?
 - a. How we interact with Jesus in His authority reveals how we hold him as God!
 - (1) not a distant benefactor

- (2) not a mild, avoidable acquaintance
- (3) not a historically helpful but presently irrelevant servant
- b. The authority of Jesus on display here is the authority of God as God to and over His people, their lives, their loves, and their eternal future
- c. How will you respond the authority of Jesus?
 - (1) Reject Him and remove Him from your experience, like the Sanhedrin
 - (2) Ignore Him as irrelevant, like the Romans and culture
 - (3) Acknowledge Him but deny His authority over your will
 - (4) Submit with absolute delight and surrender to Him in love, faith, and obedience: to know nothing except Christ crucified

B. Most of the challenges we face in our day pivot on whose authority you will ultimately follow: your own, the authority of the state, or the authority of Christ. If we are all in for Jesus, then **He must be the final authority in all that concerns us.**