

I. Read Luke 20:1-8

- A. In verse 1-2, a delegation from the Sanhedrin posed a question about authority to Jesus. Jesus responded by asking them a question about John the Baptist. Read John 1:6-7 and Luke 3:15-17 and explain how understanding John's ministry and mission was the answer to their question regarding Jesus' authority.

John's whole purpose was tied to announcing the coming of the Messiah. Therefore, if John the Baptist came from God, so did Jesus, so it would have to be by God's authority that Jesus was "doing these things".

- B. The question of the "priests and the scribes with the elders" could be viewed as a *sovereignty* question, in substance not unlike similar questions regarding the doctrine of election. Read Ephesians 1:4, 5, 11; John 15:16; Roman 9:10-24 and explain how the issues raised in these verses tend to provoke men to question God's sovereignty (authority).

Though the scribes and Pharisees were questioning Jesus' authority, by doing this they were implicitly questioning God the Father's authority (sovereignty) as well. All questions concerning *how God reveals Himself to us, His ordained plan of salvation, the basis of salvation, or God's role and man's role in salvation* usually revolve around simple questions such as, "Does God have the right to do thus and so?" or, "Shouldn't I have some *say-so* in the matter?" These kinds of questions are addressed by Paul in Roman 9.

Remember that Jesus was upsetting the religious establishment's *apple cart*. They were happy with the status quo, and their understanding of what the Messiah would do was turned upside down by Jesus. Consequently, when they rejected Jesus as the Messiah and refused to submit to His authority, they were rejecting the authority of God.

- C. Why did Jesus answer the delegation's question with a question?
Because He wanted not only to answer their question, but also to show that they already had the answer but would not accept it. They knew John the Baptist was a true prophet of God and they knew of his testimony concerning Jesus. They were simply rejecting God in their rejection of Christ.
- D. Many aspects of a believer's sanctification process revolve around questions concerning the sovereignty of God. Why is this so?
Because submission to the will of God is a difficult thing for man, even regenerate man. Whether in terms of practical matters: "What do I do with my money, my time, my abilities?" or in theological matters: "Can I earn my own salvation in any way or manner, or is salvation wholly a work of God?" — the flesh (sinful nature) will always resist God!
- E. What are some practical matters that you continue to struggle with that really amount to questions about God's authority over your life? (Think in terms of stewardship, obedience, contentment, etc.)
*** Requires a personal testimony.**
- F. Do you think our questions about predestination and the doctrine of election are more a matter of legitimate intellectual doubts or simply a reluctance to submit to the absolute authority of God — or perhaps both?
This is a tough question. There are legitimate intellectual questions that must be asked regarding election, but when all is said and done, our biggest problem with predestination is that it requires us to submit *absolutely* to God. This rubs us the wrong way! Predestination is a rebuke to man's pride and autonomy.

G. Is it ever appropriate to challenge religious authorities?

Yes, understanding that all men are flawed, there is a time to question, just as there is a time to submit and follow. The two key considerations before challenging our spiritual authorities are:

- 1. Do I really know my own heart in the matter? Perhaps I am not facing my own hidden motivations. For example, am I jealous or envious; am I just being stubborn; do I have my own personal agenda that I am trying to promote?**
- 2. Are my spiritual authorities submitting to the authority of God's Word? If they are contradicting *explicit* biblical commands, they *must* be challenged. If they seem to be acting contrary to *implicit* biblical principles, they may be challenged, but only with great care and caution. Someone has said that many conflicts could be avoided if we all doubted our own infallibility a little more!**

A further *caveat* to the second consideration involves recognizing that not all matters of life and church are explicitly addressed in Scripture. Consequently, I want those in spiritual authority over me to have demonstrated wisdom, which means they have understood the principles of the Word and can apply these principles to real life circumstances in an appropriate manner. For example, the bible does not tell us what time Sunday School or the worship service should begin. Those in authority should make these decisions after taking into consideration all relevant facts. I may not like what they decide, but the only basis for challenging their decision may be my own preference. Learning to separate means and methods from ultimate objectives is crucial. There may be a variety of means or methods to achieving a particular objective.

H. How did John the Baptist complement the ministry of Christ?

John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament-style prophets. He was the transitional figure from the Old Testament administration of the Covenant of Grace to the New Testament administration of the Covenant of Grace, which Christ Himself initiated and fulfilled. He introduced the Ministry of Christ. He announced the beginning of the "latter days" spoken of by Joel the prophet, quoted by Peter in Acts 2.