

## “By Whose Authority?” Luke 20:1-20

**Context:** Jesus returned to the Temple He purified by throwing out those who perverted its purpose for personal gain. On the Tuesday before Jesus’ crucifixion, the Scribes and Pharisees again question Him with the hope of snaring Him. This last day of Christ’s temple teaching would be followed by clarification of what the coming of the Kingdom looks like; then He would pay the price for the Kingdom’s redemption. Today we consider a subtle teaching about Jesus’ authority and what the rejection of that authority looks like. It serves Luke’s purpose to stabilize the wobbly faith of the God-lover’s faith by prophesying the rejection of Jesus’ authority so that the disciple will know that this rejection is part of the prophetic plan of God’s redemption (cf. Luke 1:4).

**Life Principle:** If you can’t identify the authority by which Jesus acts, you are either blind to His identity or hostile to its implications (cf. Luke 20:8).

### 1. Source implied - Luke 20:1-8

The Scribes questioned the authority behind Jesus’ purging of the Temple and His status as Temple teacher. Jesus’ answer in the form of a question not only implied that His teaching is based upon Divine authority, as demonstrated during Jesus’ baptism by John, but also that their authority is sourced in human rule.

### 2. Source described - Luke 20:9-15

The vineyard is a common metaphor symbolizing Israel after it came into the Promised Land from its Sinai sojourn. The farmers signify Israel’s religious leaders. The man who planted refers to God and His absence until the Messiah’s first coming. The harvest represents the righteous fruits of the faith community’s labor and the servants denote the prophets. The cherished son refers to Jesus sent by God the Father, a clear answer to the leader’s question of Jesus’ authority. The destruction of the servants represents the ruin of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the others receiving the vineyard signify the opening of the Kingdom to all humanity.

### 3. Source depicted - Luke 20:16-20

Jesus uses the *Hallel* Passover procession psalm (Psalm 118) to depict Himself as both the foundation stone and the stabilizing capstone of spiritual life, and yet a stone of destruction to all who reject Him.

## For Further Study:

- The concept of this section pivots upon the word “authority.” As a **Bible study method**, look up the term’s meaning in *Vine’s New Testament Dictionary* <http://www2.mf.no/bibel/vines.html> or in Kittel’s *TDNT*. On what basis did or do your parents have authority over you? What happened when you rejected their authority? Now, apply these questions to God (i.e. He brought you into this world, sustains you, trains you, disciplines you, calls you to Him, and rejoices in your progress). How does rejection of genuine authority exalt oneself to that authority’s place?
- Often parables will explain the subject matter that they address. As a **Bible study method**, search this passage to determine the primary subject of the parable. Then draw inferences that identify the following aspects of the parable: (1) the man who planted the vineyard, (2) the vineyard, (3) the vine-growers, (4) the servants of the vineyard owner (2 Chronicles 24:20; Luke 11:51; 9:9; Hebrews 11:37), (5) the beloved son, (6) the destruction of the servants, and (7) the others receiving the vineyard. Since this pertains to the religious leaders of Israel, how would this parable apply to religious leaders today?
- Jesus weds *Hallel* Psalm 118:22 with notions from Isaiah 8:14ff and Daniel 2:44ff in order to picture the destruction of all who reject Him. Our doctrinal statement describes this ruin as well (see our **doctrinal statement ‘On Last Things’** under **what we believe**, footnotes 5-8 at <http://www.gracepointfellowship.org/files/DocStmnt.pdf>). In what sense is Jesus, the Cornerstone, a stumbling stone to the unbelieving Jew (cf. Isaiah 8:13ff)? In what sense is Jesus, the Capstone, a stone that crushes to all unbelieving nations (cf. Daniel 2:44ff)?

## Transformation exercise:

Meditate on how you answer Luke 20:2 by the things you think, say, and do and by the things you choose not to do. At the end of each day, determine by whose authority you have lived and recite Psalm 118:22-29 if you can.