

Crushed by Heavenly Authority

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Date: 14 March 2021

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[0 : 0 0] G'day everyone. There's an outline that you got on your way in, in your handout, I hope. I'm going to refer to that. It'd be great if you keep your Bible open, all that printout that you might have received of the New Testament reading. I just want to start with a bit of a quiz, just a bit of fun. I've got a few options coming up on the screen. You can put your hand up if you think A is correct and leave it down if you think B is correct. It's a bit of a grammar quiz. Peter, let's have the first one. I lost my temper, but I shouldn't have. I lost my temper, but I shouldn't have. Think about it for three seconds. One, two, three. Hand up if you think A is correct. Hand down if you think B is correct. Ready, set, go. Okay. Oh, so Florence looked around and didn't want her. She was... Anyone? Anyone?

Okay. Okay. Anyone going to vote for that? Okay. So, oh, okay. That's right. Let's see the answer. Oh, okay. So everyone's right. Well done. Great job. Lost my temper, but I shouldn't have.

Okay. Let's see the next one. What's this? In which room is the ball? Which room is the ball in? So hand up if you want to be A, hand down if you want to be B. Which is it going to be? Okay. So, all right. Let's see the answer for that one. Oh, okay. People a bit unsure about the next one. In which room is the ball is the correct answer for that one. Oh, people are a bit unsure about that grammar. Okay. The third one. Boris came to the beach with Fred and I. Boris came to the beach with Fred. I want to see hands straight up. Those people are a bit unsure the last time. Okay. Hand straight up for A. Boris came to the beach. Okay.

Let's see the answer. Yes. Fred and me is correct. Yep. That's right. You guys are all wrong. Thanks for that, Peter. I appreciate your help.

So, I was raised by what some might call grammar Nazis. They were constantly correcting my grammar, their rationale being that certain forms of speech sounded grotty. Throughout my childhood, I was drilled into correct grammar. Can my friend and I play games? Don't finish your sentence with a preposition. In my mind, growing up, mum and dad were the authority on grammar.

[2 : 5 0] But when I was grown, I learnt pretty quickly that correcting someone else's grammar isn't really that cool. It's a great way to lose friend. And I nearly learnt that it's a pretty good way to lose jobs. One of my friends, who's a primary school teacher, he would often mock me about the correctness of grammar when I talked about it with him or when I tried to correct him.

He would argue with me that grammar is fluid. That is, that it's constantly changing. That is, it's determined by use rather than by standards. But then I asked him, well, you're a teacher.

You teach young children. Are you telling me that there's no grammar? There's no rules? No. And he says, oh, no. Of course not. Not with kids. I felt vindicated.

In today's passage, Jesus has ridden into town on his colt to praises and joy. Do you remember? You remember that he wasn't happy though, was he? He wept over Jerusalem because they were blind to his coming. So what do you think he did when he arrives in town? Stop at the pub, have a bite to eat and asleep? He did have a long walk, didn't he? But when he arrives in Jerusalem, he's no longer sad, but he's not sleepy either. Today we see three encounters in which Jesus displays his authority.

And in each we see the Jewish leaders, that is, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people seek to repel Jesus and change public opinion. And in each time we see that it's Jesus who commands authority and the Jewish leaders who have none. Let's take a look. Point one.

[4 : 45] Jesus arrives at Jerusalem and his sadness is gone, but it's replaced by anger. Take a look in your Bibles. Verse 45. When Jesus entered the temple courts, he began driving out those who are selling.

It is written, he said to them, my house will be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers. Jesus doesn't need pampering after his long journey. And he doesn't seem to be concerned about his impending death, does he? He enters the temple and he discovers a market. But does he start browsing Etsy necklaces and home-brewed kombucha? No. He drives out the people who were selling. You might have thought Jesus made a whip, but here Jesus' weapon is the scriptures. It says, it is written, he says, it is written, my house will be a house of prayer, but you have made a den of robbers.

But is such jarring behavior appropriate? People are just gathering, getting together, having a bit of fun, trying to make ends meet. Well, yes. Because instead of selling, do you see what Jesus was doing in the temple? He was teaching. The scripture quoted from Jeremiah 7 was about an Israel who had forgotten God. They lived however they wanted. And instead of using the temple to worship God and listen to him, they were buying and selling. Wasn't Jesus right to weep?

Nothing had changed in Israel since before they were exiled. And what about the Jewish leaders, the ones who were responsible for the spiritual health of the nation? Did they know how the temple was being used? Of course they did. They were the blind leading the blind. But they weren't happy with Jesus redecorating, were they? Verse 47 tells us, the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. They wanted him out. They wanted his influence finished. They'd had enough. They wanted him dead. But they couldn't do anything.

When I was young, mum would go out sometime. My brothers and I would be watching TV. And before she'd go out, she'd say, can you guys blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, something, something. And we'd all nod, say, yes, mum. And because she's not a fool, she'd come over and switch off the telly. And we'd snap out of our trance. And she'd say again, can you guys please set the table before I get back? And we'd say, oh yeah, okay. Well, we were happy to obey, but we all hung on the telly. We were watching it and entranced by it. It had our attention. I'm sure some of you have had experience with that from different sides. The Jewish leaders commanded no presence compared to Jesus. They were leaders, but they had little authority. They were weak. But the people hung on Jesus' words because he was teaching them about God. He was the one with real authority, the one with authority from God.

[8 : 27] But the Jewish leaders would not be outdone. They would not be forgotten. They had a plan. They were going to change the opinion the people held of Jesus. They were smart.

They were sus about why and how Jesus was doing these things, turning their culture upside down, ruining their market. Who did this guy think he was? We're going to show these people that he's just another upstart making a ruckus. So they come to him with a question. Take a look. Chapter 20, verse 1.

One day, Jesus was teaching the people in the temple courts and proclaiming the good news. The chief priests and the teachers of the law, together with the elders, came up to him, tell us by what authority you're doing these things. They said, who gave you this authority?

The Jewish leaders are going to show the people that Jesus had no authority. Jesus is doing and saying some serious and significant things. He needs to be able to back himself if he's going to do them.

So they ask him about his credibility. People care about that, don't they? Even today. But the Jewish leaders have brought a knife to a gunfight, haven't they?

[9 : 51] And what's interesting is that Jesus doesn't answer their question. Instead, he responds with a question. And instead of them complaining about sidestepping, they're immediately confused.

Have a look from verse 3. He replied, I will also ask you a question. Tell me, John's baptism, was it from heaven or of human origin?

They discussed it among themselves and said, if we say from heaven, he will ask, why didn't you believe him? But if we say of human origin, all the people will stone us because they persuaded John was a prophet.

Jesus asked them about John's baptism from heaven or from people. They deliberate among themselves and they come up with a brilliant response.

We don't know. I love this response from the Jewish leaders. Hmm. Yes. We've put our heads together. I think we'll phone a friend.

[10 : 54] What I found even more ridiculous in their response is the process. They don't seem to have any opinion or conviction, do they? Imagine if Mark came to question time like this.

Just whatever sounds best. Anything to avoid trouble. They have no clue, do they? They're completely confused. How are these guys the experts? How are they the spiritual leaders?

They don't fear God, do they? They don't care about the people. It's not a difficult question, but they rejected John's baptism and they just didn't want to be caught out.

They wanted to interrogate Jesus' authority, but it's they who need to give an account for theirs. They make their own rules and they don't listen to God.

It's unsurprising they respond to Jesus the way they do. Jesus has already said this when he looked at Jerusalem. You did not recognize the time of God's coming.

[11 : 58] So when Jesus speaks with God's authority, it's foreign and it's jarring. I think this is something that we, but maybe in particular you, should think about concerning your spiritual leaders.

If they become wishy-washy and only make decisions to please people or themselves, if they lose regard for God's authority and can't give an account for their actions regarding it.

I'm obviously talking about myself, my colleagues, but maybe also your Bible study leaders, your CU leaders, your accountability partners.

Hold us to account. Hold each other to account. But pray for each other too. Well, instead of Jesus telling where his authority came from, he told them a parable.

Pretty classic response for Jesus. This is a parable about tenants from hell, almost literally. They're so cruel. Not only would they not give the owner some fruit of their vineyard, but they killed the son in order to get the inheritance.

[13 : 17] And what's really interesting about this parable is the level of understanding by those who hear it. I wonder if anyone here is a renter. Anyone renting?

Few people renting? Don't be ashamed. I'm a renter. My landlord's okay. Not perfect, but that's renting. How quick do you think I'd be out on the street if we neglected our inspections, let alone beat up the real estate agent?

You don't have to put your hand up, but I wonder if anyone here has renters. I wonder if you might maybe also have kids. Maybe.

How do you like their logic? I'll kill their kids, then their house will be mine. What do you reckon? Well, the people listening didn't think so either.

But did you notice that both the people and the Jewish leaders understood the parable? And when Jesus said in verse 16 that the vineyard would be given to others, what did they say?

[14 : 28] No. God forbid. Never. At the end it says the leaders knew the parable had been spoken against them.

This parable paints a picture of Israel's response to him and to those he sent. God wasn't looking for fruit, but for obedience, which is what Israel agreed to when he saved them from Egypt and gave them their own land.

But what did Israel do? They ignored God and they ignored the prophets. And when he sent his own son, they schemed to kill him. And now the people were worried.

Well, surely not. Surely God wouldn't take away what he's given us. But what does the scripture say? Verse 17. The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces. Anyone on whom it falls will be crushed. And while it sounds a bit like Jesus is mixing metaphors, it's talking about the same thing.

[15 : 39] That which you have rejected from God will crush you. Just as the parable said, he will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.

Something particularly striking is that parables so often have a hidden meaning which many people don't see or understand. But in verse 19, like I said a moment ago, we read that the leaders knew that Jesus had spoken the parable against them.

So they aren't that clueless after all. Except that the rest of the verse says they looked for a way to arrest him immediately. So they're doing exactly as it said about them.

Not clueless, just stupid. So why didn't they? Because they were afraid.

Afraid of the people. They acknowledge that Jesus has spoken the truth and they still want to kill him. But they have no power, no authority to kill Jesus.

[16 : 53] They're supposed to lead the people but they're afraid of them. And so it begs the question, how do they kill Jesus? They have no influence.

The people don't seem to respect them. They seem to be more worried about how the people react to them. So how could they? Unless there was another power, another authority assisting them, enabling them.

The Jewish leaders have no power. They have no authority. They walk around wearing robes, enforcing the law or a law, but they have forgotten about God's authority.

In fact, they outright reject it. So let me see a show of hands. Who thinks there's a right way with grammar?

Yeah, a few. Primary school teacher. Who thinks there's not? Yeah, okay. Lots of people didn't put their hand up.

[18 : 03] That's all right. I have another friend. He's a linguist and a language teacher. He teaches adults, not kids, who've moved to Australia.

I was recently talking to him. I talked to him a lot, actually, about my grammar hang-ups. He says that while grammar does have rules, what's right today and what my parents taught me is subject to change throughout history because language and grammar are fluid.

They do change and it is determined by use that people change grammar and that generations change grammar rather than by some invisible Oxford council.

I was a bit crushed to hear that because I couldn't correct people anymore, which is probably better for me in the long run. What we've seen in this passage is that Jesus is God's authority.

Whoever comes, sorry, who comes from heaven who commands presence. God's people rejected God, they rejected his messages, they rejected his son and according to prophecy those who reject this stone they will be broken to pieces.

[19 : 28] the passage that Rhianna read before showed us that the false prophets who reject the true God were slaughtered.

It's quite a gruesome image, wasn't it? Proved that they had no authority, their God had no authority, no power and they suffered for it and now the sun has come what do you think will happen to the tenants who kill, who reject the air?

But what's so interesting about this part of the gospel is that isn't it Jesus who's going to his death?

Not the religious leaders? Remember last week as Jesus was walking down the Mount of Olives he said that he's bringing peace. It doesn't mean that God doesn't punish those who reject him but in Jesus God displays extraordinary grace and love and crushes his own son.

In Isaiah 53 verse 5 on the slide it says he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed.

[20 : 51] so that even the evil tenants might have another chance at the inheritance if they are willing. Even those who bowed down to other gods if they are willing.

Even those who killed God's messengers if they are willing. Even those who nailed Jesus to the cross if they are willing.

Hold on. So those arrogant tools who care nothing for people only for themselves constantly looking to kill Jesus. That's right.

If they accept true heavenly authority anyone who is willing can be healed by Jesus. And the same is true for us in fact for all people today.

Even those who think Jesus is just a story for kids if they are willing. Even those who have lived their whole life running from God if they are willing.

[21 : 57] Even those who spent their lives devoted to themselves if they are willing. But much like the tenants and the Jewish leaders so many people don't recognize heavenly authority do they?

They think it's unimportant outdated or need supplement. Doesn't that sound familiar? People not listening to God's messages not listening to God's word as though there's some greater authority or knowledge to have here in the world as though a person or position or experience might be better than heavenly authority.

So while we need to keep our leaders accountable we need to keep each other accountable don't we? And aren't there constantly new attitudes and ideas and views and schemes and memes and ten point plans zinging around?

In a world where Jesus is outdated and the church has made public mistakes take care that you hold on to heavenly authority at all costs not afraid of what people think and certain of the truth the Jewish leaders didn't and they buckled under that truth sorry under that pressure my mistake not to say there's nothing of value here but beginning to relax on what God says is right specifically listening to him and praying gathering serving encouraging loving building growing giving is a step in that direction don't take that step don't let a friend take it don't let one of your leaders take it instead hold on to

God's authority hold on to Jesus let his death be for you and have the inheritance of an heir how would I pray that we do this heavenly father we give you thanks for Jesus who comes and speaks with God's authority guard us against ignoring or forgetting or allowing competing voices to draw us away from you help us to confidently hold on to him despite what people think so that we may inherit eternal life amen but you I I

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