

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 20:1-8

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we will read Luke chapter 20. Today, we will read verses 1-8.

We have now come to the final week of Jesus' earthly ministry. During the previous three and a half years, everything Jesus and His disciples did was for the sake of this week. Jesus, as the Son of God who came to earth to save mankind, was actually the least free of all. When He would be born, where He would be born; when He would die, how He would die; on what day He would die, and at what hour He would die—all of these had already been prophesied by the prophets in the Old Testament. And when Jesus came to earth, He lived completely according to God's will, exactly as the prophets had foretold. Now Jesus had come to His final week.

If we put together the accounts from the four Gospels, we can roughly conclude that He arrived in the vicinity of Jerusalem on the Sabbath. During the Sabbath evening meal, Mary anointed Him with ointment. Then on the next day, which was the Lord's Day, He entered the city as King, receiving the joyful praise of His disciples and those who followed Him, crying out loudly: "Hosanna! Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'" That day He entered the temple but did nothing, because He entered as King.

The next day, likely Monday, He entered the city again. This time He came as Priest, and He cleansed the temple, just as we read last week. He drove out those who bought and sold there, saying to them, "My house is a house of prayer." Then we come to chapter 20.

Verse 1: “Now it happened on one of those days, as He taught the people in the temple and preached the gospel, that the chief priests and the scribes, together with the elders, confronted Him.”

“One of those days” should refer to the third day of His entering the city. The first day He entered as King; the second day as Priest; and the third day He entered as Prophet. A prophet must speak many words from God. Therefore, on this third day—Tuesday—He was extremely busy. Scripture records much of what happened, and from Luke 20 through 22:6, it should all belong to this third day when He publicly fulfilled His role as Prophet, directly speaking with and confronting the ruling classes of the time: the chief priests, scribes, Pharisees, and elders.

Previously, Jesus had tried to avoid direct and public conflict with the authorities because His hour had not yet come. But this was His final visit to Jerusalem, and He knew that the coming Passover would be the time for Him to go to the cross. Therefore, He seized this final opportunity to faithfully fulfill His prophetic ministry. Regarding God’s will and God’s word, He made no compromises whatsoever. Not only did He refuse to compromise, but He also spoke wisely the very words that needed to be spoken.

In fulfilling the office of Prophet, the most important thing is to speak for God. What did He speak? He spoke the words of the gospel—the words of Jubilee. The acceptable year of the Lord had finally come to mankind through Jesus Christ. Therefore, Jesus went into the temple to teach the people and tell them about the gospel. In fact, the “gospel” directly points to Jesus Christ Himself. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. At that very moment, representatives of the ruling class—the chief priests, scribes, and elders of the Jews—came forward.

Verse 2: “And spoke to Him, saying, ‘Tell us, by what authority are You doing these things? Or who is he who gave You this authority?’”

They were likely referring to what Jesus had done the previous day when He entered the temple, cleansed it, and drove out those buying and selling there.

At that time, the priestly system had become completely corrupt. The chief priests were appointed by Roman officials and were usually Sadducees. They took advantage of the people who came to offer sacrifices by selling oxen, sheep, and doves in the temple and exchanging money. Not only that, but they profited greatly from it. Truly, as Jesus said, they had made God's house of prayer into a den of thieves. When Jesus cleansed the temple the day before, He directly threatened their source of income.

They considered themselves the authorities within Jewish society, so they directly questioned Jesus: by what authority was He doing these things, and who gave Him such authority? Their question concerned the source of authority—where it came from. Their own authority came from men, especially from Roman officials. Looking at this carpenter from Galilee, they were certain He had no connection with Roman authority. Therefore, they believed He could not possibly possess the authority to do such things. So they came and challenged Him directly: where did Your authority come from?

Verses 3–4: “But He answered and said to them, ‘I also will ask you one thing, and answer Me: The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men?’”

Of course, Jesus knew what they were thinking. Very wisely, He did not answer their question directly. Instead, He asked them a question. Sometimes, when facing provocation, the wisest response is not direct confrontation, but asking another question and requiring them to answer.

Jesus' question was extremely wise. He asked about John's baptism—whether it was from heaven or from men. If they answered honestly, they would naturally understand where Jesus' authority came from. In other words, Jesus indirectly answered their question. Whether they could understand His meaning depended on whether they were honest.

If they were honest, they would recognize through John's testimony where Jesus' authority came from. If they were dishonest, then even if Jesus told them directly, it would be useless. Jesus' question was truly masterful.

Verses 5–6: “And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘If we say, “From heaven,” He will say, “Why then did you not believe him?” But if we say, “From men,” all the people will stone us, for they are persuaded that John was a prophet.”

John had already been dead for more than two years. His ministry had spread widely among the people, and he was recognized as a martyr—a prophet who died for his testimony. The words of a martyr carry special power, because his life itself bears witness to what he spoke. The standing of John the Baptist among the people had already been firmly established, and the chief priests, scribes, and elders knew this well.

Therefore, they dared not say that John's baptism was from men, because the people would stone them. But if they admitted it was from heaven, then Jesus could ask, “Why then did you not believe him?” Not merely believe John personally, but believe the prophecy he spoke as a prophet.

In Luke 3:15, Luke records: “Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not.” And how did John answer? Luke 3:16–17 says: “John answered, saying to all, ‘I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.’”

John clearly and plainly told his followers that he was not the Messiah. The coming Messiah was Jesus, and John was not even worthy to untie His sandal strap. Since Jesus was the coming Messiah, then naturally His authority came from God. With this one question, Jesus placed the chief priests, scribes, and elders into a dilemma.

Verse 7: “So they answered that they did not know where it was from.”

Immediately they lied. They actually knew, but they dared not face the truth honestly. For a dishonest person who is unwilling to face the truth directly, more truth is useless. Therefore, Jesus chose not to answer them directly.

Today we also should learn from this example. For a person to receive salvation, first there must be honesty in the heart—a willingness to face one’s past, to recognize oneself as a sinner who can only be saved by God’s grace and whose sins can only be forgiven through the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Such genuine honesty is essential for salvation. But these chief priests, scribes, and elders were unwilling to answer Jesus honestly.

Verse 8: “And Jesus said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.’”

When they lied and claimed ignorance, though they actually knew in their hearts, Jesus honestly told them: since you will not speak truthfully, neither will I tell you. Their “we do not know” was dishonest; Jesus’ “I will not tell you” was honest.

Today Jesus still speaks to each of His children as the Prophet. When we read the Scriptures, God Himself speaks directly to our hearts through His Word. We must be willing to honestly face ourselves—our failures, the crookedness of our thoughts, and our impure motives.

Through the words of Scripture, God once again speaks to us. As long as we are honest and willing to stand in the light of His Word, recognizing our true condition and coming before Him to confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us all our sins.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. You were sent by God to come among us. Not only did You die for us and bear our sins, but You also gave us Your Word. Through our daily reading of the Scriptures, You speak once more to our hearts and cleanse us again. Help us to know Your Word more deeply and to experience more deeply

its cleansing work in our lives. May our living on earth become a good testimony, helping our relatives and friends around us to know You as well. Bless my daily life. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.