

THE AUTHORITY OF THE KING 12: *Jesus' Authority over Loyalty* Matthew 10:34–42

Introduction: My Ticket History

- We have a major authority issue in our world today. We simply do not like it when people tell us what to do or how to act. I say that even though most of us would say something to the contrary. We can be very quick to say that we don't have an authority problem, that is, until someone impresses their authority over us. Then we do. For instance, how many tickets have you received for speeding or other infractions in your life?
 - My 1st ticket – 65 in a 45 on the entrance ramp of a highway in Chicago.
 - My 2nd ticket – Blocking an intersection at a red light.
 - My 3rd ticket – Failure to yield at a 2-way stop.
- Even though you know you probably deserve many more than you have received, how many of you when the officer was standing before you thought, *"This isn't fair; I don't deserve this ticket."*

Or let's take this authority question from a different angle. How many of you like it when someone tells you to do something? How many of you wake up in the morning thinking, *"I really hope my boss does something today to prove they are more powerful than me?"* How many think, *"I really hope something happens today to help me understand how ineffective and limited my power is?"* How many of you like to submit yourself to other people? How many of you enjoy being subordinate to other people? My guess is not many of you; but if you do, we might think something is wrong with them.

But flip the script, how many of you like to be the one in authority? How many of you like to be the boss of a given situation? How many of you like to be the one to tell other people what to do? How many of you like that role better than the role of being under someone's authority? My guess is that most of us would fall to that side of the equation if we had the choice.

Listen, I don't have to tell you that this attitude of revolting against authority is something that comes very natural to us? We see it in our kids, but truth be told, they see it in us. You gave it to your children because you received it from your parents who had received it from their parents and so on it goes . . . all the way back to Adam & Eve.

Think about it. When God created Adam & Eve, He gave them incredible freedom. He created them with a world to explore and oversee. And He only gave them one rule: Don't eat of one tree. Remember that? But when our parents walked through that garden that one day, looking at that tree, their thoughts came back to one thing: I want to eat of that tree. Actually, as they

were around that tree, the enemy of God came to them and tempted them to revolt against the authority of God. The serpent cleverly convinced them that the only reason God didn't want them to eat of that tree was because God didn't want them to be like Him. He questioned the authority of God and they bought it and now we stand here today with the impulse to revolt against anyone or anything that tells us to do something or not do something.

In fact, we can even go further back than Adam and Eve. This was the exact reason why Satan fell from heaven. If you didn't know, God originally created Satan as the chief of angels, but that ended up not being enough for him. He did not want to be in submission to anyone, not even God. And so he said to himself, *"I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High"* (Isa 14:14). That attitude of independence comes out in us all the time.

Review: The Authority of the King

- Over the past 12 weeks, we have been trying to paint the picture that Jesus indeed is the most authoritative person this world has ever seen. There is no one and nothing in this world that is more powerful than Him. Matthew's argument in chapters 8—10 has served to build to this point this morning. Think about it. We have seen the authority of Jesus . . .
 - He heals a Leper;
 - Heals a paralytic who is on the other side of town;
 - Heals Peter's mother-in-law of a fever;
 - Speaks to the weather and it listens;
 - Casts out demons of two crazy men;
 - Forgives the sins of a paralytic & then heals him;
 - He raises a girl from the dead;
 - He heals a woman from a 12-year bleeding problem;
 - He heals blind men along the road
 - He heals a man who cannot speak

On and on Matthew could go. Words simply do not convey the authority and power that Jesus displayed to His followers. And all of this has been building to this one point. Jesus is authoritative over sickness; He is authoritative over nature; He is authoritative over disease; He is authoritative over the spiritual world of demons; He is authoritative over sin. But there is still one question left to be answered: **IS HE MY AUTHORITY?**

As we have been spending time looking at these events, I hope there has been something stirring in you. Listen, this book is not just like a history book of events. It is not a book of stories. The author of Hebrews tells us that the Word of God is living and active, sharper than a two-edged sword (4:12) Martin Luther used to say that when he would read the Word, the Word would end up reading him. You see, if we walk out of this series on the authority of the King without cutting away areas in our life in which we are not allowing Him to rule or reign, we have missed the point of this series. It is not enough

for us to walk out feeling that we have a better understanding of some cool stories of Jesus' authority. He wants to be YOUR AUTHORITY! And that is what we are going to talk about this morning.

Listen: Jesus will not stop or be satisfied until He has your ultimate submission. He doesn't even want to be 1B in your life. He doesn't want you to pursue Him only when it is convenient for you. He doesn't want anything to compete with His undivided attention. And He will continue to call you to give up anything that competes with Him—even good things. That is what Matthew identifies for us today.

Vs. 34 → Wow! This seems harsh. After all, what He says here seems to be contrary to what we usually talk about when it comes to Jesus. Doesn't Jesus say that He came to bring peace? Didn't Jesus say that He came to give life more abundantly (John 10:10)? Then why in this world would He be telling us that He came to divide with a sword?

Well, that's just the point. What He is talking about here has very little to do with this world. It is other-worldly. Let's think of this from Jesus' point of view. Eternally, the 2nd member of the Trinity, along with the Father & Spirit, creates the world in which they could pour out their love and invite others to share into their special relationship.

To which man said, *"No thanks, I want to do it on my own."* And suddenly there was this separation between the Creator and the creation He created to share His love with. And the only way to bring about the restoration of that relationship was for Jesus to leave the comfort of heaven to wage war with the evil that opposed Him.

He came to eliminate and restore His place as the ultimate seat of worship in the life of His people. His point here is that He will do whatever He must to cut out, remove, separate, eliminate, and put to death—anything that competes with His authority as the ultimate One to worship.

Jesus does indeed bring peace. He does bring life. But we have to understand that the way of the Kingdom is so upside down from how we normally think on this earth. We will see at the end of the passage in even more detail, but for now, we must resist the thought that peace means no conflict. Maybe, in Jesus' plan, the way to ultimate peace and life is only through major conflict. Or let's think about it in these terms . . .

Illustration: Cleaning Your Room

- Have you ever told your children to clean their room and they go down there 30 minutes later only to notice that they have taken everything out of every drawer? I used to do this as well. I probably still do. When I want to clean the garage, I take everything out and then put things back inside in orderly fashion.

- Sometimes, before there is order, there must be chaos. The order is coming, but only after the chaos happens.

Or we can look at it from another angle. *“Is neutrality opposition?”* We tend to think in terms of Switzerland. We see them as peaceful and so as long as they are not opposing us, they offer no real threat to us. The only problem with that thinking spiritually is that there is no such thing as spiritual neutrality. You are either with God or against Him. And so are the things He has created. We either use them to draw us closer to Him or we warp them and put them on the throne that is reserved only for Him!

And so, Jesus says that He did not come to bring peace to the earth, He came to bring a sword. He is going to do whatever He can to remove or divide anything from keeping Him first place in all things. That might even include your family.

Vs. 35–37 → He says that He came to set a man against his father; a daughter against her mother; and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. One of those seems out of place for us, but in their culture, when a woman married, she really became one with the husband and his family. Read the story of Ruth and you will see the commitment that came from many daughter-in-laws to their mother-in-law. Like I said, much different from today’s world.

As we read this, we need to be clear. Jesus is not saying that He came so that we would seek conflict. He is not saying that since you love Him, you need to continue letting your father know that you love Jesus more than him. He is not saying that we should seek to be set against them. What He is saying is that if Jesus is your ultimate loyalty, conflict will follow. When a person comes to place Jesus as the first priority in their life, it is very possible they find out their greatest enemies become those from their own household.

In many ways, vs. 37 interprets the previous verses. Jesus is trying to get to the heart of our love and loyalty. He is asking us this morning, *“Is there anyone that you love more than me?”* And He goes after those relationships that have the most potential of being idols—family relationships.

Can we idolize the family? Is it possible that the family that loves each other, serves each other, spends lots of time with each other, looks to each other for love and support, and ministers together . . . is it possible that the god for that family is a good family? Absolutely. And it is very possible for you and me to get to the place where our family members are more valuable to us than Jesus is to us. It is possible that we could make decisions that promote the glorification of our sons or daughters instead of Jesus.

The Christian is called to love Jesus more than their family. They are called to love God more than their parents. They are called to love Jesus more than their children. Just think of that for a minute. I had the opportunity this past

week to get out of town with my youngest son, JT. We had an incredible father/son time with each other. We laughed. We played. We talked. It was awesome. And in that, it can be very easy for me to hear the enemy whisper in my ear, *"Did God really say that your child shouldn't be the most important thing in your life?"*

Illustration: Abraham & Isaac

- Genesis 22 describes the greatest example of God's desire for submission and love more than any love we might have for a family member. It is the story of Abraham & Isaac. If you do not know what happened or need a reminder, God had promised Abraham that it was through his descendent that the nations of the world would be blessed. He had promised Abraham that his descendants would be like the sand on the seashore.
- And then when Abraham is old, really old, past-having-a-child old, his wife gets pregnant and gives birth to Isaac. He was the one that would continue the lineage. But God wanted to make sure that He loved Him more than his son, Isaac. And so God tells him to go up to this mountain and sacrifice his son.
- Hebrews 11:19 says that it was faith that God would fulfill His promises to Abraham, even if He obeyed God and killed his son, God must be able to raise Him from the dead.

We are grateful that God doesn't call us to those sort of decisions any longer. But that choice that Abraham was poised with still smacks us in the face from time to time. The reality is that Jesus does ask us today, *"Do you love me more than your child?"*

In fact, Jesus makes a very black and white statement. He says that if you love your father or mother more than Him, you are not worthy of Him. He says that if you love your son or daughter more than Him, you are not worthy of Him. Two things impact me from this statement.

First, this is not meant to be exclusive. It's not like you sit there and say, *"Well, I'm glad He didn't mention my spouse."* Or *"He didn't mention my girlfriend, I guess I'm good."* If that thought comes into your mind, you have missed His point. His point is that if there is any relationship that takes a priority in your life other than Him, you are not worthy of being in a relationship with Him.

Second, these shocking words might have become too familiar to us that they have lost their shock. Did you read what Jesus said? Come on now, if anyone other than Jesus says this, we have a major problem. Can you imagine your boss saying that at your next staff meeting? Can you imagine your pastor saying that? Some of you can imagine your spouse saying that.

I get it that there might be some skeptics here this morning that have a problem with this statement, but my guess is that most people who claim to be

Christian do not have a problem with it. It is hard, for sure, but they get it. I mean, we have just seen how Jesus flexes His authoritative muscles and now He demands exclusivity in the heart of His followers. I mean, who can make such demands, except of course, the One who created us; the One who has the power over all things; the One who has no beginning or end—Jesus Christ!

Jesus does not give us a hard statement like this without giving us the means of solving our problem. What do we need to do to make sure Jesus has exclusive right to our heart? We need to rethink what it means to be part of His Kingdom. In order to find true life in Him, we have to be willing to give up our life here.

Vs. 38–39 → This is what I’m saying, the Kingdom of Jesus turns things upside down for us. He turns things on its head. If you want to find your life, then you must be willing to lose it. If you will lose your life for Jesus’ sake, you will find it.

You know this, people are looking for the meaning of life all the time. My guess is that some of you have come in here this morning thinking maybe going to church will help you find some meaning in your particular situation. People want meaning. They want to live for something greater than them.

Jesus gives us the clue to finding it. The real meaning of life is only found when we realize that our life is not worth holding on to. Or as Jesus says, we are willing to take up our cross and follow Him. That phrase meant something completely different to the 1st Century Jew than it does to us today. Today, it’s just a cliché. To them, they knew that the person who was picking up their cross was on a one-way journey to death.

My prayer is that some of you will discover that your way of living has not done it. But at the same time, that voice in your head will continue to tell you that you are right and everybody else is wrong.

I remember the first time I took Karsten golfing with me. He just rode the cart and hung out on the greens. It was a great time. I even let him drive the cart at different points. But he wasn’t the best at staying on the cart path. As we approached this bridge with no sides, I told him what to do. His response, *“Dad, I got it. I know what I’m doing. Let me do it.”* My response, *“No, if we do it your way, we will die. You need to listen to me.”*

We want control of our life. We want to do it our way. And Jesus is coming to us today and telling us, *“No, if you do it your way, you will die. Your only hope of truly living is to do it My way.”* Submitting to the authority of Jesus in all things in our life is the only way we will find the ultimate fulfillment of freedom in this life. One commentator put it in these terms:

“Those who live for self die twice and may never even live once. Those who die to self, die once and live twice, now and forever.”


I beg of you to take this question seriously: **IS JESUS MY AUTHORITY?** Absolutely, He causes division. But He leaves us with one last thought of the grace and rewards that He brings for those that do follow Him.

Vs. 40–42 → Jesus says that when you receive (meaning, take to heart the message that He has given) the messenger of Jesus, you are receiving Jesus. When You receive Jesus, you receive the Father, who sent Him. Or we could even break it down in this way.

- ☐ To receive an apostle is to receive Jesus
- ☐ To receive a prophet is to receive Jesus
- ☐ To receive a righteous man is to receive Jesus
- ☐ To receive a little one—the smallest member of the kingdom—is to receive Jesus.

The way that we respond to those that are sent by Jesus indicates something about our heart towards Him.

He ends this section with a promise. I love this. He promises us that even if we do the smallest act of kindness (a cup of cold water) to the smallest of people (some unnamed disciple), it will be rewarded. The doctrine of rewards in the NT is greatly misunderstood.

 2 Corinthians 5:10 → *“For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”*

This is sometimes referred to as the Bema Seat of Christ (the Greek term for judgment here is “bema”). We need to understand that the Christian will never stand before Christ in judgment for our sins (it is cast as far as the east is from the west and nailed to the cross). But we will stand before Him in judgment of rewards. When it says that we are to “*appear*” it has the idea of being turned inside out. It means . . .

“to be laid bare, stripped of every outward façade or respectability, and openly revealed in the full reality of one’s character. All of our hypocrisies and concealments, all our secret, intimate sins of thought and deed, will be open to the scrutiny of Christ.”¹

We are told that we are to appear before Him SO THAT each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, whether good or bad. I cannot stress this enough, this is not a judgment of sin, that has already been taken care of

¹ Lutzer, Erwin W. *Your Eternal Reward: Triumph and Tears at the Judgment Seat of Christ*. (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Publishing, 1998), 28.

through the cross of the One to whom we now stand before. So what is it? We get a little clue by the word that Paul uses for “bad.” There are some words that he could have used that speak of evil or real badness, but he did not use those words. He used the term that refers to something being “worthless.” In saying that, Paul is saying that there are some things that people do in this life that are just simply worthless; wasted opportunities.

This is a judgment whereby Jesus is going to be giving out rewards for faithfulness, for that which you have done for good. Those things that are bad is not a reference to sin that is un-confessed or not taken care of, that would nullify the cross. The bad things are probably a reference to wasted opportunities, misuse of times that you had to be useful for Jesus.

What Jesus tells us here is that showing kindness to the least of the followers of Jesus will be rewarded. Or, let me summarize it in this way. Your submission to Jesus might bring a sword in your relationships. It might bring tension, sacrifice, and suffering. But the smallest of deeds, done in the name of Jesus, has value. It advances the Kingdom here and brings rewards when you stand before Him in glory.

Conclusion: