

**The Character of Jesus 69**  
**Chief Priests Challenge Jesus' Authority**  
**(Matthew 21:23 – 27, Mark 11:27 – 33, Luke 20:1 – 8)**

- Characteristic: Selflessness
  - Following the Matthew account, although all three are nearly identical.
  - (23) “As He was teaching.” Jesus easily could draw a crowd to hear what He had to say. All manner of rabbis taught there regularly.
  - (23) Chief priests and elders. These primarily would be Sadducees, but some Pharisees would be among the elders.
  - (23) “By what authority.” Over the previous several centuries, the regulation (not in the Law of Moses) was established that one had to be endorsed by three rabbis before teaching.
  - (24 – 25) Jesus’ question of them bore directly on the answer to their question. The “authority” of John the Baptist arose from his well-known miraculous birth and the prophecy of his father, Zacharias (Luke 1:5 – 25, 57 – 80).
  - (25 – 26) The challengers missed the point of the example of John (that John’s “authority” came from the same place as Jesus’). They were much more interested in political position than truth.
  - (27) I suspect that the wiser heads in the crowd understood what had just happened. Jesus was not being evasive. Rather, He had answered their question, but they were too political to see it. God had endorsed John as evidenced by Zacharias. God had endorsed Jesus by His many miraculous works.
- Application: Selflessness
  - The heart of authority is self-centeredness.
    - Some sincerely believe that they should be in charge, which implies that followers require control, which denies liberty.
    - Even well-meaning authority stifles discussion of other ways to look at things (right or wrong), so errors cannot be weeded out over time.
    - Authority figures eventually oppose other authority figures, resulting in division.
    - Authority figures not being given for the modern church, those who adopt such positions must, by necessity, invent the requirements, so God is not part of the process.
    - Authority figures are counter-productive to the goals of the church.
  - How can selflessness lead?
    - Certainly, those who claim authority will induce the weak to follow them by a variety of methods, none of which involve growing the liberty and faith of others.
    - Jesus spoke from the selfless position of becoming consistent. His teachings were thought-provoking, but not complicated. He started from common understandings of right and wrong and applied those same truths to new areas.
    - Liberty will develop a smaller following, but they will be more aware and have a sounder foundation of faith.
    - Liberty encourages and develops the goals of the church (a big family that will last). Those to whom others listen are promoting the hearers, not the authority.