

## FIRST THINGS:

- Welcome & Connect Card
- Please check out the QR code or [fathomchurch.org/info](http://fathomchurch.org/info)
  - for everything that's happening
- **SLIDE** COLLEGE SENIOR prayer
- **SLIDE** GO DEEP Class - Gary Scheer

## INTRODUCTION **MATTHEW SLIDE**

Hey, if you have your Bibles, and I hope you do,

- please grab them and turn to Matthew chapter 21.
- I'd encourage you towards a paper Bible if possible...
- You can use one of the hard-backed black bibles
  - under every single chair.
  - You'll find Matthew 21 on page **826**.

## INTRODUCTION

So, Matthew 21 starts with Jesus entering Jerusalem riding a donkey...

- But then he went to the temple...
  - saw the corruption of the leaders...
  - and he freaked out!
- He turned over the tables...
- He drove them out of the temple with a whip.

It's one of my favorite texts...

and one of our elders, Eric Shelly, got to preach it!

And I was a little jealous...

- so, I'm just gonna have to talk about it a little...
- because our text today is directly connected.

## ILLUSTRATION: WEAK JESUS

See, one of the reasons that I love that text...

- is because popular images,
  - for whatever reason,
- portray Jesus as somewhat unmanly.
  - Like, he's got feathered hair...
  - And he's got a warm glow about Him...
  - And he's wearing a goofy pastel Miss America sash.
- He's always portrayed as very unmanly.

But listen:

- That can't be who Jesus is...
- if he walks in a temple...
- starts flipping over tables...
- driving men out...
  - and NO ONE does anything to stop him.

Nobody goes,

- *"No one flips over my table."*
  - There's no one trying to fight him...
  - There's no resistance at all!

He just drives them out!

Jesus is not a weak, docile, passive man. NO!

- He confronts their sin...
  - and in doing so,
- He attacks the men in power....
- He attacks their reputation...
- And he attacks their very identity.

## TRANSITION

And today the men in power are going to question Jesus about this event.

So, we're going to talk about **SLIDE AUTHORITY** today.

It's the day after Jesus cleansed the temple...

And Jesus has the audacity to show back up to that very place...

And if there's one word that marks this encounter...it's AUTHORITY.

So, let's get after it.

Matthew 21 starting in verse 23.

## MATTHEW 21:23

[23] And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?"

## EXPLAIN: AUTHORITY

So, Jesus gets back to the temple,

- and he is most likely teaching in the Court of the Gentiles,
  - where most teaching occurred.
- But this is the very same place where he overturned the tables.

HE RETURNS TO THE SCENE OF THE CRIME!

And the chief priests and the elders come up to him.

- Now, these guys...
  - together with the scribes and Pharisees,
- form what's known as the Sanhedrin...
- which is the authoritative ruling council of the Jews.

So, these guys ARE the AUTHORITIES of their time.

And, when they ask about **THESE THINGS** that Jesus is doing,

- they're talking about the cleansing of the temple yesterday.

And they ask Jesus two questions:

- **By WHAT authority are you doing this?**
- **And WHO gave you this authority?**

Now, just note,

- they don't deny his AUTHORITY.
  - They question it.
- They don't deny that Jesus has some sort of AUTHORITY...
  - because they watched it in action yesterday!

The word AUTHORITY in the Greek is *exousia* which means

- **SLIDE** *the rightful and legitimate exercise of power*

And they think THEY'RE the rightful and legitimate power in the temple...

But then yesterday, Jesus messed with the balance of power.

So, they're asking WHAT KIND of AUTHORITY Jesus claims to have.

- Is it from God?
  - If so, they can bust him as a blasphemer!
- Or is it just his own authority?
  - Because if so, they can lock him up...
  - cause they're the rightful authorities in the temple.

But we know...and Jesus knows,

- that they aren't actually concerned...
- about identifying this authority...
  - no, they're playing a game with him.

But Jesus is masterful in his response.

Verse 24:

## MATTHEW 21:24

[24] Jesus answered them, “I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things.

Now, Jesus isn’t dodging their question...

like some sleazy politician:

- “Let me answer your question with a question...”
  - Hey, how bout you just answer the question!

No, this was actually a common procedure in rabbinic debate.

Verse 25:

## MATTHEW 21:25-26

[25] The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?” And they discussed it among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ [26] But if we say, ‘From man,’ we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet.”

## EXPLAIN: JOHN

Jesus asks about John the Baptist’s ministry.

- Was it **from heaven or from man?**

Jesus plays the exact same game with them that they try to play with him!

‘Cause if they answer...

- that John’s ministry was from God,
- they will have the correct answer to their own question,
  - because John witnessed about Jesus...
  - as the Messiah.

- But if they say John's ministry was from man,
  - the people would rebel against their authority,
  - because they lauded John as a prophet.

And the fear of man prevails in their hearts.

Verse 27:

### **MATTHEW 21:27**

[27] So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

The only response that could preserve the religious authority's dignity...

- and not give Jesus the upper hand...
- was to say they did not know the origin of John's ministry.

THEY KNEW JESUS HAD AUTHORITY...but they're unwilling to admit it.

And so Jesus, too, refuses to give them an answer.

### **SCRIPTURE**

Now Christian, we too play games with Jesus' authority.

So, for the Christian, we say our authority is the **SLIDE SCRIPTURE**

God's revealed Word IS our AUTHORITY.

Fathom's statement of faith it says this about the Bible:

**SLIDE** *It is the final authority for doctrine, practice, and life, and all believers are to study and to apply its teachings to their lives.*

**The scripture is our authority, because it's the revealed Word of God.**

But we often play games with Jesus, just like these leaders did.

Here's how this plays out.

God will reveal something to us in his Word:

- *“This is sin.*
- *This is what I want of you.*
- *This is how I want you to live.*
- *This is what obedience to my commands looks like for you.”*

And if that hits us in a place where we have no intention of submitting...

Well, then, we begin to play games...

- Just like the chief priests and the elders.
- We start to play games...
  - in order to question God’s authority.

Let me show you just two of the games we play.

## **FEELINGS**

The first, and most common AUTHORITY game we play is...  
the **SLIDE FEELINGS** game.

People do this all the time.

They say things like this,

- *“There’s no way that God would want me to do that.*
- *There’s no way that Jesus would ask me to do that.*
- *There’s no way that could be his expectation...*
  - *because that would make me miserable...*
  - *and God doesn’t want me miserable.*
  - *God wants me to be happy.*
- *So, there is no way I can stay with my spouse...*
- *There’s no way I can leave this job...*
  - *Cause God wants me to be happy.*

- *Ok, I know what the Bible says...*
  - *I know what Jesus says...*
  - *I know that the Bible commands that...*
- *but there's no way that he could actually want that for me...*
- *because what he wants for me is my happiness."*

**We look inward to our FEELINGS.**

- **That's by far, the most common response to his authority...**
- **when we don't like what we hear from the scriptures.**

### **APPLICATION: MADE UP JESUS**

But then, we don't often reject Jesus outright...

- because you like him.
- And you say you're a Christian.
- And what would your friends and family think?

So, instead we play this game:

- *"My God would never ask that of me.*
- *The Jesus I follow is about love...not that."*

**But in doing so, what we're saying is that Jesus,**

- **as God has revealed him in the SCRIPTURES,**
- **is not the real Jesus.**

But that leads to the fundamental problem.

- If you don't believe the SCRIPTURES...
- if you believe your FEELINGS...



Then who is Jesus?

- *“Well, he’s whoever I say he is.”*

So you’re more comfortable with your invented Jesus than the historic one?

- *“Yes I am.”*

Why?

- *“Because my Jesus lets me do what I want.”*

And there we have it.

I really believe that a bulk of Evangelical Christians...

- think that Jesus is more like Santa Claus....
  - and we’ve been nice...
  - and he’s kept track of that...
  - and so there will never be any coal for us.
- We believe that what we deserve is candy and toys every day...
- and that there is no difficulty in following him.

## **TRANSITION**

*“Jesus wouldn’t ask me to do that because he wants me to be happy,”*

- is actually you fundamentally shifting AUTHORITY...
- from the SCRIPTURE to your FEELINGS.
  - *“I don’t like what the Bible is saying...”*
    - *so, I’m going to recreate you...*
    - *so that you only require of me...*
    - *what is easy or natural for me to do.”*

But FEELINGS make a terrible God.

## RELIGION

Now, the second game is even more dangerous...  
it's the **SLIDE RELIGION** game.

So, somehow you've become convicted...

- maybe through a sermon...
- maybe through a book you read...
- maybe through a loving friend who confronted you...

But you felt the pressure of the Lord saying, "*Do this,*"

- and you go, "*I just don't think I can do that.*"

So at that moment, here's the RELIGION game:

- We will try to make up for our disobedience...in other areas.
- We will level up and rely on our RELIGION.

So God will say, "*You need to confess this sin,*"

- and we'll say, "*I won't confess that...*"
- *but here's what I will do...*
  - *Uh, how about I just get up 30 minutes earlier...*
  - *and read the Bible a little bit more?"*

**And we barter with God using the chips of our RELIGION.**

As if God is in heaven going,

- *"Let me weigh that out!*
- *Let me think about that.*
  - *Jesus, Holy Spirit, here's what he's offering...*
- *He doesn't want to be obedient to what we're asking of him...*
- *but he HAS offered 30 more minutes of Bible reading...*
  - *where we can convict him of stuff...*
  - *that he has no intention of doing anyway."*

And we can giggle all we want, but I bet a bulk of us are right here.

God comes and says,

- *“Take a step to the left.”*

And we go,

- *“There’s no way I’m taking that step to the left.*
- *So let me do this instead.*
  - *Instead of taking this step to the left,*
  - *let me run as hard as I can to the right.*
- *So, instead of dealing with this one thing...*
  - *let me get involved in this...*
  - *let me start leading here...*
  - *let me give more...*
  - *let me pray more...*
- *let me do more over here so I don’t have to be obedient to that.”*

And we end up doing all these things that look like faithful RELIGION...

- but in the end they’re acts of disobedience...
  - because what God was asking...
  - you didn’t want to do.

So you frantically run to RELIGION with no real RELATIONSHIP with Jesus

## TRANSITION

We play the FEELINGS game and the RELIGION game.

But Christian, our authority is Jesus as he is revealed in the SCRIPTURES.

- And God has revealed all we need for life and Godliness...
- in his Word.

But even more than WHAT your authority is...

Jesus wants us to wrestle with WHAT WE DO with that authority!

And the Biblical word for that is **SLIDE OBEDIENCE**

So, look back to our text,

- because Jesus now tells a parable...
- to emphasize his point to the religious leaders.

Verse 28:

### **MATTHEW 21:28**

[28] "What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.'

### **EXPLAIN**

So, remember, Jesus is still talking to the chief priests and the elders...

- And he tells a parable of a man who owns a vineyard...
- and had two sons.

And the father asks the first son to go and work in the vineyard.

Verse 29.

### **MATTHEW 21:29**

[29] And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went.

### **EXPLAIN: REPENT**

In the ancient Jewish world...

- the respect and obedience of children was expected.
- And so, this would have been an astounding response...
  - to show that level of disrespect to authority.

But then the text says he “changed his mind”.

- The Greek word there is *metamelomai*,
- which literally means *to repent*.

He repents...he changes his mind...and obeys.

Verse 30.

### **MATTHEW 21:30**

[30] And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go.

### **EXPLAIN**

At first the second son...

- seems like the model son,
  - unlike his brother,
- and makes a public display of his obedience.
  - But while the first son says, “*I will not*”;
    - and the second, “*I will*”;
  - the first repents and goes into the field,
    - but the second never shows up.

He is the perfect picture of the religious officials.

- They give God all the surface compliance one could ever ask.
  - But they’re playing games!
    - And refuse to follow God’s Messiah.

Verse 31:

## MATTHEW 21:31-32

[31] Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. [32] For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

Jesus springs his trap on the religious authorities...

- by summarizing his teaching on kingdom ethics.
  - Those who claim to be God's people...
  - must show it by submitting to God's authority...
  - and obeying God's commandments.

The religious leaders talk about AUTHORITY...but they refuse to OBEY it!  
They're just playing games.

## APPLICATION

Hey, I want you to hear this, church.

- I hope that if you're a Christian, you would say:
  - That the SCRIPTURES are your final authority.
  - That you place yourself under the authority of God.

But listen to me: **AUTHORITY without OBEDIENCE is USELESS!**

- Is there any objective evidence in your life...
  - that you have an actual love for Jesus Christ?
- Are you actually under his authority?
- Or are you just saying you are on Sundays...
  - but never showing up to the vineyard?

If you aren't...it could be evidence that you've never really trusted in Christ.  
Hey, I'm not making that up!

### **SLIDE JOHN 14:21a**

[21] Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.

- You aren't saved BY your obedience...
- BUT you are saved TO obedience!
  - It's not to earn God's love...but it definitely requires effort.
    - Grace is against EARNING...
    - it's not against EFFORT.

### **CONCLUSION: OBEDIENCE**

So, we started this sermon by talking about AUTHORITY...  
But we are ending by talking about OBEDIENCE

Remember: **AUTHORITY without OBEDIENCE is USELESS!**

And here's how I want to end.

- I want you to examine if you're playing games...
- with Jesus right now.

There are some things that we can play games with...  
and then there are things that you just don't play games with.

### **ILLUSTRATION: GUNS**

Like, my nephews had some Nerf guns when they were little.

- They had one of those fully automatic ones...
  - Like just gat-gat-gat-gat-gat...

But I'd take that gun...

- and give them the single dart shooters...
- And we'd turn off all the lights and get after it...
  - And it was a lot of fun...
  - to just mow down 7-year-olds with that thing!
- That's a fun game!

But their dad also has a 9mm handgun...and that we'd never play with.

- We never turn off the lights...
- run around in the dark...
- and pop off a few rounds.

**Because there are guns you play with and guns you don't play with.**

## **ILLUSTRATION: ANIMALS**

There are animals you play with and animals you don't play with.

And you may think, "*No, animals are God's creatures and can be trained.*"

But I'd just like you to watch a little show called *When Animals Attack*.

- It always STARTS with a "trained" animal...
  - and ENDS with a fashion model...
  - being mauled by some wolf...
  - while she was trying to sell watches.

There are certain animals that were designed by God to be companions...

- and then there are certain animals that,
  - because of the Fall,
- will now eat you.

You don't play with those animals. It will eventually go bad.



## ENDING

There are certain things you don't play games with.

It always ends badly.

And I need you to get that version of Jesus out of your head!

That's not who he is!

- Yes he is all loving...
  - but he is God's justice.
- Yes he is the lamb of God...
  - but he's the lion of Judah.
- Yes he is the one who saves...
  - but he DEMANDS your OBEDIENCE.

You don't play games with Jesus Christ.

- He's not stupid.
  - He's God!
- You have not fooled him.
- He's not tricked.

Are you playing games?

- Has He pressed you?
- Has He shown you what obedience to Him looks like?
- Has he shown you what He's commanding you to do?
- And what has your response been?

Has your response been,

- *"That can't be right."*
- *"There's no way God would ask me to do that."*
  - *He's more interested in my happiness than that."*
- Or do you respond by trying to make up for it in other areas?
  - Like, with some weird religious barter system.

If your answer is yes,

- you are a sinner...
- who needs to repent.

I know that's not very politically correct...

and not a good method for us to keep growing this church.

But you have a wicked, idolatrous heart...

- where whatever it is that you don't want to be obedient to...
- is your idol that you value more than God.

The call today is to be the first son...

- even if you have historically,
  - maybe even to Jesus' face...
- told him you have no intention of obeying...

I'm pleading with you...

- change your mind...
- change your direction...
- repent!

## ENDING

So, church, is Jesus your **SLIDE W/PADS** AUTHORITY?

- Are you OBEDIENT to the SCRIPTURES?
- Or are you just playing games?

Hey, right where you are,

- if you've never surrendered to Jesus,
- he wants you to.

If you've never SURRENDERED to him,

- the invitation is for you to lay it down today.

- To put your faith and trust in him.
  - He loves you.
  - He has good plans for you.
- And a relationship with him begins...
- with you believing in your heart...
- and confessing with your mouth that he is Lord.
  - You confess, *“Jesus, I give you my life.*
  - *I want to follow you.*
  - *trust in you.”*

And if you have surrendered to him...but you find yourself playing games...

- You can keep walking in that disobedience.
  - There’s no doubt about that.
- But my prayer is that you would take Jesus very, very seriously.

He is NOT to be messed with.

- Change your mind.
- REPENT.

Let’s pray.

## RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – [fathomchurch.org/give](http://fathomchurch.org/give)
- PRAYER - [fathomchurch.org/prayer](http://fathomchurch.org/prayer)
  - Prayer Night
    - What we need is You!
    - We don’t need to grow numerically,
    - we don’t need the new facility,
    - we don’t need to get out of this building.
    - Those things are blessings but not what we need.
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Love you church, let's stand and sing together.

## RESOURCES CONSULTED:

- Anderson, Dave. *I Fight Authority Authority Always Wins*.
- Carson, D.A. The Expositor's Bible Commentary. Matthew.
- Osborne, Grant. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Matthew.