

# Matthew 21:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

## Analysis

**We cannot tell**—The Greek οὐκ οἶδαμεν (ouk oidamen) means 'we don't know'—a lie. They knew but wouldn't admit it. **Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things**—Jesus honors their choice. Since they refused to acknowledge God's authentication through John, they'd proven themselves incapable of recognizing divine authority in Jesus.

Jesus's refusal wasn't evasion but righteous judgment. He wouldn't cast pearls before swine (Matt 7:6). Those who willfully suppress truth forfeit further revelation. God's authority authenticates itself to honest seekers; it's hidden from those who've hardened their hearts (Matt 13:11-15).

## Historical Context

In Jewish legal tradition, witnesses who refused to testify forfeited their right to bring charges. The leaders' claimed ignorance disqualified them as judges of Jesus's authority. Their intellectual dishonesty—obvious to all observers—undermined their credibility while preserving Jesus's teaching authority.

## Related Passages

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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1. When have you claimed 'I don't know' to avoid uncomfortable truth you actually recognized?
2. How does persistent rejection of clear truth eventually lead to judicial hardening where God withholds further light?

## Interlinear Text

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καὶ ἀποκριθέντες τῷ Ἰησοῦ εἶπον, Οὐκ οἴδαμεν.

**And** **they answered** G3588 **Jesus** G2424 **and said** G2036 **We cannot** G3756 **tell** G1492  
G2532 G611 G2036 G3756 G1492

ἔφη αὐτός, καὶ αὐτός, Οὐδὲ ἐγὼ λέγω ὑμῖν ἐν  
**he said** **unto them** G846 **And** G2532 **unto them** G846 **Neither** G3761 **I** G1473 **tell** G3004 **you** G5213 **by** G1722  
G5346 G846 G2532 G846 G3761 G1473 G3004 G5213 G1722

ποίᾳ ἔξουσίᾳ ταῦτα ποιῶ  
**what** **authority** G1849 **these things** G5023 **I do** G4160

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