

Authority in Religion

Matthew 21:23-27

INTRODUCTION:

- A. We are living in a religiously divided nation and world in which there are over 300 religious bodies fractioned into over 2,000 different subgroups or braches in the United States alone. With a Bible that speaks of the singular, the religious world has responded with a multiplicity . . . Why?
- B. It shall be our thesis in this study that many religious differences would end and much religious division would heal into unity in the religious world would believe in the Bible as the sole source of **all** religious authority. If the inspired Word of God would be believed and followed as the standard in **all** matters of religions, then:
1. The plural could give way to the singular.
 2. Disunity could give way to unity.
 3. Religious division which comes from men could give way to the unity Jesus prayed for in John 17.
- C. The word “authority” is correctly spelled with nine letters.
1. The first eight letters spell “author it.”
 2. Two question become:
 - a. By what authority”
 - b. Who authored it?
- D. **Matthew 21:23-27** - Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?”
- 24 But Jesus answered and said to them, “I also will ask you one thing, which if you fell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things:
- 25 The baptism of John--where was it from? From **heaven** or from **men**?” And they reasoned 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 men,’ we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet.”
- 27 So they answered Jesus and said, “We do not know.” And He said to them, “Neither will I fell you by what authority I do these things.”
1. In this text, the Jewish leaders are questioning Jesus as to the authority by which He taught and performed the works that he did. He agreed to answer their question if first they would answer His.
 - a. If they answered that John’s baptism was from heaven, then he would ask them why they would not accept him.
 - b. If they answered that John’s baptism was from men, then they feared

that the people would turn against them.

c. Therefore, they answered by saying they did not know.

2. From this text we learn that men act by authority which comes from one of two sources: **HEAVEN** or **MEN**. Hence we have only two sources from which men arrive at their religious beliefs.

a. If a thing is authorized by Heaven, it is to be believed and obeyed.

b. If a thing is authorized by men only, it is to be rejected and not to be believed or obeyed.

E. Therefore, always ask:

1. Is it from Heaven, or, is it from men?

2. Did God command it, or, did man make it up?

3. Did it originate in Heaven, or, did it originate upon the earth?

4. Who authored it?

THE BASIS OF AUTHORITY IN RELIGION.

A. The words of Christ are the words of God and by His authority.

1. **John 12:49-50** - "For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.

And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak"

2. This was spoken before Christ's death, burial and resurrection. The "all authority" of Matthew 28:18 had not been granted.

B. But **NOW, this side of the cross and the resurrection**, Jesus has **ALL** authority in matters of religion.

1. **Matthew 28:18** - "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, **All** authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."

2. **Matthew 7:28-29** - "And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

a. There was something different then about the teachings of Christ as opposed to the teachings of men. . . and there still is.

b. Men could recognize the differences then. . . he can today as well.

3. **Matthew 17:5** - "While he (Peter) was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, **This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!**"

a. Moses represented the Law.

b. Elijah represented the prophets.

c. for centuries people heard them . . . But now hear Christ!

4. **Acts 3:22-23** - "For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you.

And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.”

- a. Peter was quoting from Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19.
- b. Note carefully **Deuteronomy 18:18** - “I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.”
- c. **John 12:48-50** - “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.

For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.

And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.”

5. **Ephesians 1;22-23** - “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church.”
 6. **Colossians 1:18** - “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.”
 7. **Hebrews 11-2** - “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.
- C. When Jesus ascended back to Heaven, what did he do with the words that God had given Him?
1. Did He take them with Him? No!
 2. Did He give them to preachers? No!
 4. Did He give them to a pope? No!
 5. Did He give them to councils, conferences, or conventions? No!
- D. Jesus gave it to the apostles. **John 17:8** - “For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.”
- E. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles in accurately receiving and communicating God’s Word. **John 16:13-15** - “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.
- He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.
All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.”
- F. What did the apostles do with the truth that the Holy Spirit guided them into?

By divine inspiration they wrote it all down in a book—**THE BIBLE**.

1. **Ephesians 3:3-5** - “How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already,

By which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),

Which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:”

2. **2 Peter 3:15-17** - “And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is Salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you,

As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable

people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked.”

3. **2 Peter 1:21** - “. . . Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

G. Having placed His words and authority in written form, the Bible teaches that we will be judged by the things written therein.

1. **John 12:48-50** - “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.

For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.

And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.”

2. We will NOT be judged by standards of:

a. What we **think**.

b. What we **believe**.

c. What **father or mother believed**

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These things will not be the
be the standard by which
we are judged.

3. **We will be judged by the Word of God—our rightful and only authority in all religious matters.**

H. Question: Is the Bible alone sufficient to guide us in all matters of religion?

1. The thesis passage of the Book of John is **John 20:30-31** – “And truly signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;

But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”

2. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** - “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

That the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

3. **2 Peter 1:3** - “As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.”

4. **Jude 3** – “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for **the faith which was once for all** delivered to the

5. **1 Corinthians 4:6** - “Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and

Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that

none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.”

6. **Galatians 1:8-9** - “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.”

- I. God has always demanded that we show respect for the **ALL-INSPIRED and ALL-AUTHORITATIVE Word of God**.

1. **Revelation 22:18-19** - “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;

And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

2. **Matthew 15:9** - “And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”

- J. Examples of man substituting his authority for God’s authority.

1. EXAMPLE: Adam & Eve (Genesis 3:1-7)

GOD’S AUTHORITY: —→ “Shall not eat”

MAN’S AUTHORITY: —→ “Shall eat.”

2. EXAMPLE: Nadab & Abihu (Leviticus 10)

GOD’S AUTHORITY: —→ Specific fire (From altar of sacrifices)

MAN’S AUTHORITY: —→ Any fire (profane fire)

3. EXAMPLE: Moses (Numbers 20)
GOD'S AUTHORITY: —→ Speak to the rock.
MAN'S AUTHORITY: —→ Smote the rock
4. EXAMPLE: Uzziah (2 Samuel 6:1-7)
GOD'S AUTHORITY: —→ Not to touch the Ark of the Covenant"
MAN'S AUTHORITY: —→ Touch Ark under special conditions

K. That which is from man is:

1. Uninspired. **Hebrews 1:1-2** - "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,
 Has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds."
2. Human tradition.
 - a. **Matthew 15:9** - "And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."
 - b. **Colossians 2:8** - "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ."
3. Addition or contradiction. **Mark 7:8-9** - "For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men--the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.
 And He said to them, "All too well you relect the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition."

THE IMPORTANCE OF BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

A. In Matthew 21:25 Jesus revealed the two sources of authority on the earth—**from Heaven** or **from men**. Please observe the application of each.

1. Authority **FROM HEAVEN** authorizes:
 - a. Only one church.
 1. Matthew 16:18
 2. Colossians 1:18. 24
 3. Ephesians 1:22-23
 4. Ephesians 4:4
 - b. Singing in worship.
 1. Colossians 3;16
 2. Ephesians 5:19
 3. That's what god authorized. Anything else will have to come from somewhere else.
 - c. Baptism for the remission of sins.
 1. Acts 2:38
 2. Acts 22:16

- d. Baptism is by immersion. Romans 6:3-4
- e. The Lord's Day is Sunday. Acts 20:7
- f. Lord's Supper partaken of each Sunday. Acts 20:7
- g. Elders and deacons in each congregation.
 - 1. Acts 14:23. "In every church." Every congregation
 - 2. 1 Timothy 3:1-13
- 2. Authority **FROM MEN** authorizes:
 - a. Many churches and denominations. Who authored it? Who authorized it?
 - b. Musical instruments used in the worship services. Who authored it? Who authorized it?
 - c. Salvation by faith only. Who authored it? Who authorized it?
 - d. Sprinkling and pouring constituting baptism. Who authored it?
 - e. Infant baptism. Who authored it? Who authorized it?
 - f. Divorce and remarriage for grounds other than fornication—adultery. Who authored it? Who authorized it?
 - g. Preachers being called "Pastor," "Reverend," or "Father." Who authored it? Who authorized it?
 - h. Wearing of special religious robes, uniforms, or religious clothing. Who authored it? Who authorized it?
 - i. Religious organization such as missionary societies, councils, synods, conventions, districts, dioceses, etc. Who authored them? Who authorized them?
 - j. Observing religious seasons and holidays not authorized in the bible. Who authored it? Who authorized it?
 - k. Women preachers, women priests, women elders, teenage elders, etc. Who authored it? Who authorized it?
 - l. Fellowshiping homosexuals, lesbians, etc. Who authored it? Who authorized it?
 - m. Once saved always saved. Once in grace, always in grace. "Once
 - n. saved, always saved." Who authored it? Who authorized it?
 - n. Abortion. Who authored it? Who authorized it?
 - o. Euthanasia. Who authored it? Who authorized it?
 - p. Voting to accept members. Who authored it? Who authorized it?
 - q. Praying to Mary and dead saints. Who authored it? Who authorized it?
 - r. Doctrines of purgatory, celibacy, transubstantiation, etc. Who authored it? Who authorized it?
 - s. Baptizing for the dead. Who authored it? Who authorized it?
 - t. A variety of religious names and titles. Who authored them? Who authorized them?

- u. Man-written creeds. Who authored it? Who authorized it?
- v. The list could go on-and-on. Each time we would have to ask, “Who authored it? Who authorized it?”

B. **Deuteronomy 34:4** - “Then the LORD said to him, ‘This is the land of which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants. I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.’”

1. God made this statement to Moses at Mt. Nebo.
2. The next verse tells of Moses’ death there in the land of Moab.
3. In essences, God said: “Moses, see what you have missed.”
4. At the judgment, my friends, you will see what you have missed by:
 - a. Adding to God’s Word what he did not include.
 - b. Taking away fro God’s Word things He did include.
 - c. Making rules and laws and binding them where God did not.
 - d. Handling the Word of God deceitfully.
 - e. Not being obedient to the Scriptures.
 - f. Not being faithful to the Scriptures.
 - g. Not choosing to live as the Bible showed you.
 - h. Not being in the Lord’s Church.
 - i. By following the teachings of men and their man-made churches and creeds.

CONCLUSION:

- A. The Bible directs us through:
 1. **Direct commands.**
 2. **Approved apostolic examples.**
 3. **Necessary inferences.**
- B. God loved us enough to show us the right way . . . His way! **John 14:6** – “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.
- C. **While time still stands, God is providing you with an accountable opportunity to turn from the things authorized by men and obey the things authorized by Him.**
 1. We have a choice in which religious authority we accept, follow, and live by . . . That which is **FROM HEAVEN**, or, that which is **FROM MEN**.
 - a. How important is that Choice?
 - c. On that choice you are staking both your soul and your eternity.
 2. Leave the will of men and obey and follow the will of God.
- D. **God’s plan for man’s salvation.**