
receives Him who sent Me" (Mt. 10:40; Jn. 13:20). Likewise, if we reject the apostles, we reject Christ. "He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me" (Lk. 10:16).

Apostles Gave Us the New Testament

With the authority of Jesus Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the apostles preached and then wrote down the truth revealed to them. The apostle Paul explained, "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" (Eph. 3:3-4).

The New Testament, as the collection of the teachings of apostles, is our sole authority in matters of religion. The Holy Scriptures are "able to make (one) wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). We are not to add to nor take from the final completed revelation of the New Testament (Rev. 22:18-19).

The Authority of Men?

Outside of and without God's Word, no one can rely upon their self as an authority in religion. The prophet said, "O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23). And, "There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death." (Prov. 14:12).

Outside the Bible there are many traditions and creeds written or handed down by men, but as proper authority in religion these are useless. Jesus denounced the traditions and doctrines of men saying "in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Mt. 15:9). Paul warned against following authority "according to the commandments and doctrines of men?" (Col. 2:20-22).

Neither the collected religious wisdom of men from the past, nor the religious dictates of men today, whether one man or a group of men, will suffice as proper authority in religion. Paul warned "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" (Gal. 1:8-9).

Far too many rely upon a "preacher" or "preachers" for their authority. Preachers are not and cannot be the final authority in religion. The only thing faithful preachers can do is preach "the Word" not "their word." Paul charged the preacher Timothy to "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

Some believe that religious authority is based upon and determined by a vote of the congregation. But neither all the members of a congregation nor a group of congregations have God's blessing or authority to legislate laws. Christ warned churches in sin and doctrinal error to repent or He would reject and remove them (Rev. 2:5; 3:5-16). Nor do elders or bishops have any legislative authority under Christ's authority. They cannot make authoritative laws as lords, but instead they are to serve as ensamples and as shepherds overseeing the flock (1 Pet. 5:1-4).

Conclusion

Shall we obey the authority from Heaven or from men? "But Peter and the other apostles answered and said, 'We ought to obey God rather than men'" (Acts 5:29). The proper chain of all authority in religion begins with God. The Father gave authority to Jesus Christ, who in turn, gave authority to His apostles to teach His will. The apostles committed the authorized will of Christ to the writings of the New Testament.

I pray that you would recognize the only true and proper source of authority in religion is the final and completed revelation of God, the New Testament. And that you would reject any and all religious authority originating from men.

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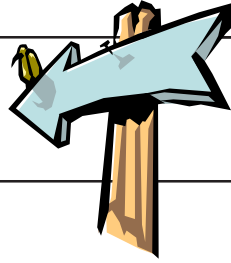
"By what authority are
you doing these things?
And who gave you
this authority?"
Matthew 21:23

By What Authority



Wayne Greeson

By What Authority



“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?’ But Jesus answered and said to them, ‘I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: 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?” But if we say, “From men,” we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet.’ So they answered Jesus and said, ‘We do not know.’ And He said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things’ ” (Mt. 21:23-27).

Jesus’ confrontation with the Jews teaches us several lessons. We need authority in religion. Authority must come from one who has the power to grant it. There are only two sources of authority: Heaven (God) or men. And the only right and true authority in religion is the authority that comes from Heaven.

Authority is needed in our homes, in our schools, in our businesses and in our nation. Authority is most needed in religion. Not just any “authority,” but the proper and lawful authority. The Greek word *Exousia* ... denotes authority (from the impersonal verb *exesti*, “it is lawful”). From the meaning of leave or permission, or liberty of doing as one pleases, it passed to that of the ability or strength with which is endued, then to that of the power of authority, the right to exercise power, e.g., Matt. 9:6; 22:23; 2 Cor. 10:8; or the power of rule or government, the power of one whose commands must be obeyed by others, e.g., Matt. 28:18; John 17:2; Jude 25; Rev. 12:10; 17:13...” (W.E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*). “Authority” is the “Legal or rightful power; a right to command or to act; dominion; jurisdiction” (*Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*).

God: The Source of All Authority

God is the source of all authority. David said, “The Lord has established His throne in heaven, And

His kingdom rules over all.” (Psa. 103:19). Jesus called the Father, “Lord of heaven and earth” (Mt. 11:25).

God’s authority is based in His position as Creator and Sustainer of all things. The apostle Paul proclaimed “God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. ...He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings...for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring’ ” (Acts 17:22-28).

Some may think that we can disregard God’s authority with impunity, but God will call us into account for our obedience or disobedience to his authority. As Lord, God “commands all men everywhere to repent” and “He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness” (Acts 17:30-31).

Father Gave All Authority to Christ

Christ was given all authority by the Father. God promised through Moses to send a Prophet who would speak with authority from God (Deut. 18:15-19). God demands the authority and words of His Prophet be respected and obeyed.

God testified Jesus of Nazareth was his Son, the Christ and His promised Prophet. God spoke from heaven at Jesus’ baptism and at his transfiguration, proclaiming of Jesus, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mt. 3:16-17; 17:1-5).

Those who heard Jesus teach “were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Mt. 7:28-29). Jesus repeatedly emphasized his authority came from the Father. “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” (Jn. 12:49).

Jesus told his disciples that his authority was to be respected by “keeping” or obeying his words. Since Jesus’ authority comes from the Father, obedience to Jesus’ au-

thority is obedience to the Father’s authority. “He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me” (Jn. 14:24).

At his ascension into heaven Jesus claimed “All authority has been given to me in heaven and in earth” (Mt. 28:18). For this reason on the Pentecost after Jesus’ ascension, the apostles of Jesus preached, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

Christ Gave Authority to His Apostles

When Christ ascended into heaven he delegated to his apostles the authority to teach disciples “to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Mt. 28:18-20). The apostles were Christ’s official representatives as “witnesses” and “ambassadors” with power. Christ told his apostles “you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high” (Lk. 24:46-49; 2 Cor. 5:18-20).

The apostles were to remain at Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit which would enable them to preach the will of Christ with authority. Jesus promised, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

By the power of the Holy Spirit, the apostles were given all truth. Jesus had promised this to his apostles at the “Last Supper.” “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” (Jn. 16:13).

Paul stresses that the word delivered by the apostles was not from men but from God through Jesus Christ. “But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:11-12).

Therefore, the apostles preached with the authority of Jesus Christ. The word of the apostles’ was the word of Christ. Christ told his apostles “He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me

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