

Back to Bible Authority

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Upon hearing Jesus teaching in Jerusalem, the Jewish leaders asked Him one very important question, "...By what authority are you doing these things?" (Mark 11:28). Obviously, the Jewish leaders of the day had ulterior motives for asking their question, but the fact remains that authority is a very important matter. If we base our actions upon a false standard of authority then they will not be pleasing to God. Unfortunately, many people rely on standards of authority that are really no standard at all. Emotion, popular opinion, and many other things are commonly the determining factor for many.

Sometimes this is done in the name of progress—advancing the cause of Christ in a new generation with greater knowledge and understanding. However, the Bible says, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). We cannot look outside of the pages of scripture for authority in any age. As we go forward, we must go back to bible authority.

The first step in going back to Bible authority is to recognize that all authority ultimately resides in Jehovah (Rom. 13:1). In Isaiah 43:21 Jehovah said, "This people I have formed for myself; they shall declare my praise." As creator and sustainer of all things, God, and God alone, has the sovereign right to rule. He is the ultimate criterion of power, truth, and reality, and, as David said, "we are His people and the sheep of His pasture" (Ps. 100:3). It is God who rules in the kingdoms of men (Dan. 4:25), and it is He who ordains the powers that be (Rom. 13:1). Because He made us He has the right to rule over us, and it is His will with which we must be concerned, not our own (Matt. 26:42).

In Deuteronomy 18:15-19, Moses foretold of the prophet whom God would raise up from among His people. This prophet would speak with the authority of God, and all men were to heed His words. As Jesus stood upon the mount of transfiguration, the Father said of Him, "...This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him" (Matt. 17:5).

Thus signifying that Jesus was He of whom Moses spoke, and that His message carried with it the full weight of Divine authority. Though Jehovah possesses ultimate authority, He has chosen to place all authority in the hands of His Son, Jesus the Christ. John wrote, "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand" (John 3:35), and Jesus Himself said, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). God speaks through His Son (Heb. 1:1-2), and we must do all things by His authority (Col. 3:17).

The authority of Christ is found not only in the words, which He spoke (John 12:48), but also in the preaching and teaching of His apostles. Jesus foreshadowed the authority that He would give to His apostles in Matthew 16:19 when He said, "...whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Jesus promised them that the Holy Spirit would come upon them after His departure, and would inspire them to teach and preach the authoritative doctrine of Christ (John 14:26; 16:13-15; etc. al.). Just before His ascension Jesus commanded them to "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..." (Matt. 28:20). When the Holy Spirit came upon the twelve in Acts 2:1-4, they were inspired by the Spirit to teach and preach the word of God. Those words, though proclaimed through the mouths of the apostles, were and still are the authoritative word of Jesus Christ. Therefore we must respect and obey them.

Just as society has moved away from respecting the authority of men, so we have moved away from respecting the authority of God. Two of the great pleas of the restoration movement were that we “speak where the Bible speaks, and be silent where the Bible is silent,” and that we “call Bible things by Bible names, and do Bible things in Bible ways.” These two well-intentioned mottos stand squarely upon the principles of Holy Scripture. Behind them was an attitude of supreme reverence for the God of Heaven, and for His will. We must develop that same attitude of respect so that we may go forward, back to Bible authority!