

The Challenge of Authority

Introduction

- I. There's a story told of a government surveyor who made his way to a farm. He went up to the door of the farmer, and when he came, he introduced himself and said he was from the government, that he was a surveyor, and he asked if he had permission to go on a plot of his land to do his survey work.
 - a. Well the farmer wouldn't let him do that because he was a firm believer that if this man were to come on his land and do his work, that this would be the first step in the government building a highway across his land. So he said, "No, I'm not going to give you permission to do that. You can't come on my land."
 - b. Well at that point the surveyor reached in his pocket and pulled out a piece of paper and said, "sir, do you see this piece of paper. This piece of paper, this government document, gives me the right to go on any piece of farm land in the nation and to do my survey work."
 - c. Well, faced with that prospect, the farmer said, "alright, I'll let you on my land." So the farmer went over and opened the gate and let the surveyor on his land. But the farmer also went to the other end of the field and opened the other gate, through which two of his most fierce bulls began to charge. And as they ran towards the surveyor, he dropped everything and began to run for his life. As he ran he heard the farmer yell, "just show them your paper, show them your authority!"

- II. We're talking about the concept of rights
 - a. We hear a lot about "rights" in the news
 - i. We hear about women's rights
 - ii. We hear about unions and the rights of union workers
 - iii. We hear about environmental rights, animal rights
 - b. What it all comes down to is how our story began – show us your paper – what gives you the right

- III. In Matthew 21 we find a discussion about "Rights". The word used here is authority.
 - a. This is one of the most basic, fundamental, yet vitally important subjects
 - b. **Matthew 21:23-27**
 - c. Who is in charge and who has the right to determine what is right is a crucial concept
 - i. When we think of marriage today – who decides who can get married? The white house? The court house? The church house? Each individual?
 - ii. What about abortion – who determines whether that child should live? The mother, the doctor, the attorney, the congressman?

iii. It all goes back to this concept – who is in charge, and who has the right to make these decisions.

IV. Here in Matthew 21 the Jews had a proper understanding of two things:

a. They understood that you have to have authority to do things

i. V. 23 – by what authority.

1. Authority is the right, the permission to do something
2. If you don't have that permission/right, you're wrong.

ii. Authority, by its basic definition authority is the standard, authority is the rules you go by.

iii. We see this in all of life:

1. Imagine playing a game with no rules – no out of bounds, no fouls or penalties... who would win?
2. Imagine going to a store and putting down a 20 dollar bill , but the cashier doesn't believe that the 20 dollar bill is actually worth 20 dollars, he has a different definition for that
3. The concepts of speed limits, a gallon of gasoline, sports, commerce, banking, cooking – everything would be chaos if there weren't any standards.
4. You go to the lumber store to by a 4 foot long board, how do you know it's 4 ft? You take out the tape measure. How do you know the tape measure is right?
 - a. We have certain understandings, standards we all live by
5. By these standards we know that a foot is a foot, a yard is a yard, a minuet is a minuet, a mile is a mile, an ounce is an ounce, red is red, blue is blue, right is right, left is left, stop means stop, Sunday is Sunday, and today is today!
 - a. That's authority - setting up and establishing the rule
 - b. The Jews understood that rules/standards were necessary to living
 - c. If Jesus was teaching without authority, He was operating without permission, He was wrong.
6. They were not wrong to ask Jesus this question, just as we are not wrong to ask this question – by what authority, who gave you permission?

b. They also understood that only someone in charge can make the rules

i. V.23 – who gave you that authority

1. Jesus demonstrated through His life, and His teaching as one who had authority
 - a. Matt. 7:29 – taught as one who had authority
 - i. Scribes would quote fathers and Rabbis

- ii. 18x Jesus would say, “I say to you...”
- iii. Who are you to say this? A 30 year old son of a carpenter
- iv. Where did you get this right?

- b. Matt. 8:5-9
 - i. Just say the word..
- c. Matt. 9:6 – to know the Son of Man has authority...
- d. Matt. 10:1 – He gave them authority

2. So they asked Jesus, who lived, taught, with authority – who gave that to you –

- ii. If I’m driving here going 90 mph, I get pulled over, the officer will say, “sir you were driving 90 mph, way over the speed limit.”
 - 1. If I say, “O I know, I had permission”. You know how he’ll respond, “who gave you that permission?” My wife...
 - 2. He’ll respond saying, “She doesn’t have the right to give you that permission.”
- iii. This is the basis of the question they are asking Jesus.
 - 1. You’re coming in our Synagogues telling people to do these things – who gave you the permission to do so

- V. Jesus answered their question with a question:
 - a. Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?
 - i. If its from God that means its God sent, we better believe it and follow it
 - ii. If its from men that means we made it up – that John was wrong
 - b. They understood that all that we do has to be done with permission, with authority
 - i. If you do something without the authority of God – its wrong
 - ii. If its not from heaven, why are we following it?

Who Has the Right to Set the Rules?

- I. It begins with God
 - a. Romans 13:1 – there is no authority except from God
 - b. Why does God have authority?
 - i. His position – no one comes above, or before God. There’s nothing or no one greater than God.
 - ii. He is the creator – He made us, all of us
 - 1. Isa. 45:9 – will the clay say to the potter...

4 [CHALLENGES FACING THE CHURCH – LESSON 4]

- c. God, being the all powerful infinite being, the creator of all has the right to do what He wants – He is not accountable to us.
- d. So.. since He has all authority:
 - i. God defines Marriage – Gen. 2:24 – man and woman
 - 1. “I think its ok for....”
 - 2. We’re acting without authority. We’re acting without permission. You’re wrong.
 - ii. God gave parents authority
 - 1. Eph. 6;4 – to bring up their children.
 - iii. God gave government authority
 - 1. Rom. 13:1-4 – it is a minister of God...
 - 2. They have the right to tax people (Matt. 22:21)

II. This means:

a. God’s authority trumps all authority

- i. There’s no one to appeal to, no one to go over God’s head and change the rules
- ii. God and his rule is over all
- iii. Acts 5:29 – we must obey God
- iv. Even when the state makes rule – God’s rule trumps all.
- v. God says it – that’s it!

b. God’s authority cannot be improved upon

- i. No updating it, no changing it – when God speaks it, that’s it
- ii. Ex. 20:25 – not build of cut stones
 - 1. Bricks are cut stones – uniform, beautiful
 - 2. Uncut don’t match – shape or color – not as pretty
 - 3. God says you don’t improve on my commands
- iii. Once God has spoken – it stands

c. Operating without the authority of God gets you in trouble

- i. Lev. 10:1-2 – offered fire God had not commanded
- ii. Matt. 7:21-23 – you who practice lawlessness – you didn’t have permission – you didn’t have the authority
 - 1. As long as you just love God – that’s what matters
 - 2. As long as the word gets out – people come to know of God – that’s what matters
 - 3. No – God wants you to follow His commandments

III. God gave Jesus authority

- a. Matt. 28:18 – all authority has been given to Me
- b. Eph. 1:20-22 – gave Him as head – God gave it to Jesus

- c. When they asked Jesus who gave Him authority – God – from Heaven
 - i. So we find Col. 3:16 – He has the authority of God.

IV. Jesus gave the Apostles authority

- a. John 13:20 – whoever receives whomever I send, receives Me, and God
- b. Matt. 16:19 – the keys of the kingdom
 - i. Keys unlock – open, shut
- c. Gal. 1:11-12 – I received it from the Lord
- d. 1 Cor. 11:23 – I received it from the Lord

V. The Apostles wrote the authority in the Word

- a. 1 Cor. 14:37 – things I write are the Lord’s commandments
- b. Acts 2:42 – devotion to Apostles teachings
- c. 1 Thess. 2:13 - things I write are the Lord’s commands
- d. Acts 17:11 – searching the Scriptures daily

The Castle

- I. How do we go about establishing what is right?
 - a. One of the easiest and most memorable ways of sharing Bible authority is through the illustration of the castle
- II. Say that I decided I wanted to build a replica of an ancient European castle here In TN. What would I need?
 - a. The tools they used.
 - b. The material they used.
 - c. Most importantly we would need the blueprint – the original design showing you how to build the castle
- III. So I get a copy of the blueprint and give it to the builders and say, “follow this exactly, because I want an exact replica of this castle.”
 - a. Well what would happen if the builder decided to add some beautiful stain glass windows where a wall originally was, thinking that I would enjoy it?
 - b. Or what if the builder decided to put in a garage so we don’t have to get wet when its raining?
 - c. Or what if the builder decided to skip out on the draw bridge, since that would take a lot of time and be difficult. Instead he just paved a drive way?
 - d. I would say, “That’s not what I wanted. I gave you the blueprint and I wanted you to follow it exactly.”
- IV. This is what God has done for us:
 - a. He has given us His blueprint – His words.
 - b. If we follow them exactly as they are written – not adding to them something that’s not there, and not taking away things I think are hard or I don’t like – we follow them exactly we will have churches and Christians today that mirror those of the 1st century – those whom God desires
 - c. **Ex. 25:9** – according to the pattern

- d. **Phil. 4:9** – practice these things
- e. So whether it is the life and activity of us as Christians, or the work of this local church – we must always seek to follow the pattern – do what God has said –
- f. We need to be people who build their lives after the pattern of God, doing everything with God’s permission, His authority

Some Concluding Thoughts:

Every Generation Will Ask Questions

- I. While their attitude about this subject may vary, this is a subject that will bring about many questions
 - a. **Story** – Little boy – sitting in the corner, - I’m sitting on the outside but I’m standing on the inside
 - b. Sometimes people struggle with their attitudes on doing what God has said
- II. Understand that every generation is going to ask these questions
 - a. Our young people are going to ask:
 - i. Why don’t we use a piano during services?
 - ii. Why do we take the Lord’s Supper every Sunday?
 - iii. Why do we have elders?
 - iv. Why don’t we
 - b. It’s not wrong of them to ask – and we should never discourage it!

Every Generation Has to Be Taught God’s Word

- I. While many in here have heard of Bible authority for years – there are some who have never heard this before
 - a. There are some who have no idea about God’s pattern – what He expects from us
 - b. They have no idea how to determine what is right and wrong.
- II. Every generation needs to be taught Bible authority:
 - a. How do you determine how we worship
 - b. How do you determine how one becomes saved
 - c. How do you determine what is right and wrong
- III. 2 Tim. 4:2 – be patient
 - a. It takes time to understand these concepts that many of you were taught from childhood
 - b. This is something our children/kids/HS/college age need to know
 - c. By what authority do you do these things?
- IV. Questions of authority – we’ve considered a lot of them. One of the most important is will I submit?