

The Church Vs. the Churches 2 –The Bible’s Authority – Pt. 1

INTRODUCTION:

1. As we continue our study of the churches of today versus the church of the Bible, I want us to consider what may be the foundational subject of this whole series.
 - A. I do this, not to be harsh, unloving, or judgmental, but to help us act as is recorded and commended of Aquilla and Priscilla who took Apollos aside and explained the way of truth more accurately (Acts 18:24-26).
 - B. That subject is the various views churches hold concerning the authority of the Bible in directing both their doctrine and their practice.
 - C. I want to study this because God expects us to grow and be able to spot what is counterfeit, or false, when it comes to matter of the faith (Heb. 5:12-14 – “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”).
 - D. What I have found in this study is that a church’s view of authority is often like a counterfeit bill in that it looks almost like the real thing.
 - i. Yet, that there is something different, not quite right.
 - ii. For, though a church may claim to accept the Bible’s authority over its doctrine and practice, it does not fully submit to the Bible’s authority.
 - iii. That deviation is what causes the problems!
2. What I want to do today is to consider what the Bible says about its authority because I feel that without a good grasp of that we will have far more difficulty spotting the problems with other views.

BODY:

I. Why does this matter?

- A. God has spoken to us today through Jesus the Messiah (Heb. 1:1-2 – “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ² 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”).
- B. Jesus...
 1. Promised to reveal these words, **all truth**, through the Holy Spirit to His apostles (Jn. 16:12-14 – “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. 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.**”).
 2. Commissioned the apostles to take these words to the world (Matt. 28:18-20 – “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.** ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ “**teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen.”).
- C. The apostles spoke and also wrote in the N.T. the words of Christ.
 1. What they spoke (1 Thess. 2:13 – “For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the **word of God which you heard from us**, you welcomed *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, **the word of God**, which also effectively works in you who believe.”). **They knew the source of the words they spoke was God!**
 2. What they wrote:
 3. 1 Cor. 14:37 – “If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the **things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.**”
 4. Their written words were the authority for how to live as a Christians (2 Thess. 3:14 – “If **anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter**, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame.”).

- D. **Authority:** Obedience to Jesus' words revealed by the apostles in the N.T. will determine our salvation (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.²³ 'And it shall be *that* every soul who **will not hear** that Prophet **shall be utterly destroyed** from among the people.'").
1. Hear means to obey, just as James declared (Jas. 1:22-25).
 2. So, salvation is dependent upon obeying Jesus' words!
 3. Therefore, one's life as a Christian, and therefore the local church one attends, must be founded upon submitting to Christ's authority and obeying His words to be unacceptable.
- E. So, this subject matters because we must see the N.T. as the authoritative words of God our Creator spoken through Jesus and revealed by the Spirit to us through the apostles that **must be obeyed** to be saved.

II. What does the Bible's Authority require?

- A. It requires that we accept its complete authority or power over our lives and service to God.
1. "Christians" generally believe they need to obey the Bible, to obey Christ, but have little idea about the level to which this obedience must be applied in their life.
 2. The Bible, however, presents Jesus and His word as having complete authority over...
 - a. The **church**, or body of Christ.
 - i. For, Eph. 1:22-23 states that as far as Jesus is concerned God has "put **everything under His feet** and appointed Him as **head over everything for the church**,²³ which is His body, the fullness of the One who fills all things in every way." – HCSB).
 - ii. This means that whatever I say and do must be done by His authority (Col. 3:17 – "And *whatever* you do in word or deed, *do* all in the **name of the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."").
 - 1) This would include how I determine where to worship.
 - 2) For, my interaction with a local church must be by Christ's authority, which would require that the local church I fellowship with be acting by Christ's authority.
 - b. The local church's doctrine and works. For, that was what the epistles of the apostles did—authoritative direct the works of the local church (1 Cor. 11:33-34 – "So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.³⁴ If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you will not come together for judgment. The remaining matters I will arrange when I come."").
- B. It requires that we limit our actions and teaching to those things revealed within the N.T.
1. We must understand that without revelation from God, we are unable to know God's will for our lives, the local church, etc.
 - a. Without revelation, God's will is a "mystery," something that cannot be known by man (1 Cor. 2:7-10 – "but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory;⁸ the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;⁹ but just as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him."¹⁰ For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God."").
 - b. Only by revelation could they know God's will in the O.T. (Deut. 29:29 – "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."").
 - c. Only by revelation can we know God's will in the N.T. (1 Cor. 2:11-13 – "For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so **no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God**.¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the **Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God**.¹³ These things we also **speak**, not in words which

man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”).

- 2. Because this is true, we are:
 - a. Not at liberty to add to/take away from the revealed word (Rev. 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.”).
 - b. Not to think beyond what is written in it (1 Cor. 4:6 – “Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.”).
- C. Because God's will must be revealed, we cannot justify our actions by the **silence** of the Scriptures.
 1. It is commonly believed that if the N.T. “says nothing” about a matter, then it can be done.
 - a. People generally believe that if the Bible does not specifically condemns something, then it can be done.
 - b. Thus, “silence” is permissive, allowing us to do whatever seeing God did not condemn it.
 2. Silence, however, **does not provide authority to act**.
 - a. When David wanted to build God a temple—a good thing to praise Him—God stated that such **action without spoken authority is not allowed** (2 Sam. 7:7 – “Wherever I have moved about with all the children of Israel, **have I ever spoken a word to anyone** from the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, **saying, ‘Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?’**”)
 - b. Only when God speaks can we act with confidence (Heb. 13:5-6 – “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For **He Himself has said**, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ **So we may boldly say**: ‘The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’”).
 - c. Therefore, **silence authorizes nothing** because...
 - i. It does not express God's mind, which cannot be know without Him revealing it.
 - ii. To act on it is to presume God's will.
 - iii. It cannot be acted on in confidence.
- **III. How do we determine what God's word approves?**
 - A. We must go to the standard, or God's revealed word, to determine what He approves for us to say and do.
 1. This means **we do not approach our service to God from a subjective standpoint**, or in other words, to act based solely on our feelings or opinions about something.
 - a. The religious world generally believes this approach is better because it is thought to come more from the heart, to show greater love.
 - b. I get that because I know a lot of subjective gift-givers. These believe it shows more love to give what you believe the receiver will want. They would say, “I love you, so **I want to determine** what to give you.”
 2. Yet, because the Bible is God's will revealed, we must approach service to Him from an objective standpoint or **based on facts rather than thoughts or opinions**.
 - a. For, we are unable to know what God wants without Him revealing it.
 - i. True in the O.T. times (Jer. 10:23 – “O Lord, I know the way of man *is* not in himself; *It is* not in man who walks to direct his own steps.”).
 - ii. True today (1 Cor. 2:11-13 – “For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God **no one knows except the Spirit of God**.¹² Now **we have received**, not the spirit of the world, but the **Spirit** who is from God, **so that we may know the things freely given**

to us by God, ¹³ which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.”).

- b. Therefore, though I may be tempted to think that I show greater love by doing what my heart says rather than what is revealed, that is not the case!
- B. We must see the N.T. as God’s will communicated in **human language** (1 Thess. 2:13 – “For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God **which you heard from us** [speaking it in human language, rp], you welcomed *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”).
 1. So, the methods of human communication were employed by God to express His will!
 2. Thus, the ways of human verbal and written communication is what we find within God’s word to communicate His will to us.
 3. What follows may seem repetitive and unnecessary, but if you remember these, when you hear how other churches approach the Bible’s authority, it will help you see the difference!
- C. The Bible communicates God’s word to us through:
 - 1. **Commands:** “To direct authoritatively: order...control” (*The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*)
 - a. Thus, biblical commands are orders from God revealed in the Bible with the intention of *directing*, or *controlling*, the lives of His followers.
 - b. Of course, the authority behind these commands is Christ Himself (Matt. 28:18-20).
 - c. Sample:
 - i. Acts 2:38 – “Then Peter said to them, “**Repent**, and **let every one of you be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (*Repent* and *be baptized* are in the Grk. imperative, or command, mode)
 - ii. If we find ourselves in the same condition today as did they, lost and in need of salvation through forgiveness in Christ, we must do what they were commanded to do.
 - 2. **Statements:**
 - a. Statements: Expressions of fact that carry the same weight as does a command.
 - b. Sample: Mk 16:16 – “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”
 - i. This factual statement implies the necessity of responding to it if one wants to be saved.
 - ii. Therefore, it carries the same weight as a command to believe and be baptized.
 - 3. **Examples:**
 - a. Defined: “A representative sample, something forming a model to be followed or avoided” (*The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*).
 - i. Paul shows this definition to be true of biblical examples (2 Thess. 3:7-9 – “For you yourselves know how you **ought to follow us**, for we were not disorderly among you; ⁸ nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, ⁹ not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.”).
 - ii. This is one reason for the book of Acts. It teaches by history/example.
 - b. Example (Acts 20:7 – “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.”).
 - i. We know meeting on Sunday to worship is right and cannot be wrong.
 - ii. Yet, the silence of Scripture meeting on any other day give us not authority to meet on any other day.
 - 4. **Necessary inferences/inescapable conclusions:**
 - a. Inference defined: A required conclusion derived from facts or premises known.
 - i. People can conclude all sorts of things from what they read in Scripture.

- ii. So, is important to note that it must be a *necessary* inference, or *required* or *inescapable* conclusion.
- b. Sample:
 - i. Acts 8:5, 12 – “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and **preached Christ** to them...¹² But when they **believed Philip as he preached** the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women **were baptized.**”
 - ii. Acts 8:35-36 – “Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, **preached Jesus** to him. ³⁶ Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water. **What hinders me from being baptized?**’”
 - iii. From these verses we reach the inescapable conclusion or necessary inference that preaching Christ includes preaching baptism. **Otherwise, why were they baptized?**

CONCLUSION:

1. So, the Bible’s revelation concerning its authority over the Christians and the local church’s doctrine and practice is **absolute** and must be strictly adhered to please God.
 - A. For, the Bible is the only source of authority we have today in determining doctrine and practice.
 - B. Human wisdom and emotion have no authority in determining the church’s doctrine and practice.
2. Next time we will compare this standard to that used by other churches to see how they hold up.
3. We always want to offer the invitation to anyone who may have strayed from the truth or has not obeyed the truth to come to Christ.
 - A. If you are a Christian, baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins, but have strayed, why not return to Christ today, confessing your sins, repenting of them, and seeking God’s forgiveness in prayer?
 - B. If you have never entered Christ, why not come to Him in F-C-R-B that you might be raised to a new life and new hope of salvation through Christ?