

Bible Authority (4): The Source of Authority: What It Is

Matthew 28:18-20

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** This is our fourth lesson on the general topic of Bible authority.

2. In our previous lessons: **recall...**

A. The general definition of authority: the rightful power to command or act.

B. We talked about our need for authority in every realm of life:

(1) Because, without the proper authority, our society would descend into chaos.

(2) Examples of authority: e.g., civil govt., traffic laws, licensing laws, sports, etc.

(3) Our need for authority in religion:

Matt. 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 tell 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 tell you by what authority I do these things.’”

(a) Their questions shows two important things regarding religious authority:

(i) Need for authority: **v. 23:** “By what authority are You doing these things?” They recognized the need for authority in religion.

(ii) Source of authority: **v. 23:** “And who gave You this authority?” They recognized that proper authority must originate from a rightful source.

(b) **3** Jesus answers with a question (**vv. 24-25:** “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: 25 The baptism of John — where was it from? From heaven or from men?”).

(c) Jesus’ answer also tells us two important things regarding religious authority:

(i) First, His answer recognizes the need for authority since He offers an answer.

(ii) Second, His answer shows there are only two sources of authority in religion:

☛ Divine authority: “From heaven”

☛ Human authority: “from men”

(d) His opponents agree about authority (**vv. 25-26:** “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.”).

(4) **4** The Bible plainly tells of the fallacy of human religious authority:

Prov. 14:12: “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”

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.”

Col. 2:20-22: “Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations — 21 ‘Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,’ 22 which all concern things which perish with the using — according to **the commandments and doctrines of men?**”

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

- C. The truth of these important Bible principles is proven by the fact there are over “38,000 Christian denominations” (Wikipedia quoting Christianity Today).
- (1) Unfortunately, these unscriptural attitudes have also permeated the Lord’s church.
 - (2) Lack of respect for divine authority is always a “slippery slope” (2 Pet. 2:1): e.g., ACMS, instrumental music, institutionalism, liberalism, social gospel, food/fun/frolic, women elders & preachers; then even further! e.g., theistic evolution, denial of the virgin birth, miracles, inspiration, resurrection, etc.
- D. These matters cannot be ignored or minimized, they are critically important! **2 Jn. 9:** “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.”
3. We gave six Old Testament examples that unequivocally show God’s displeasure when we trifle with His authority, take it into our own hands to determine what we will do and who will do it.
- ☛ Adam & Eve: Gen. 2:15-17; 3:16-19
 - ☛ Cain & Abel: Gen. 4:3-5; Heb. 11:4; Rom. 10:17
 - ☛ Nadab & Abihu: Lev. 10:1-2
 - ☛ Uzzah: 2 Sam. 6; 1 Chron. 15:12-15; Num. 4:15
 - ☛ Uzziah: 2 Kgs. 15:3-4; 2 Chron. 26:5, 18-21;
 - ☛ Moses: Ex. 17:6; Num. 20:8-12
4. **5** When we trifle with God’s authority, regardless of who we are and how good the “results” may be; we are disrespecting God!
- Lev. 10:3:** “And Moses said to Aaron, ‘This is what the LORD spoke, saying:
- ‘By those who come near Me
I must be regarded as holy;
And before all the people
I must be glorified.’
- So Aaron held his peace.”
- **2 Jn. 9:** “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.”
5. **6** In our last lesson we looked at authority from a negative standpoint (**The Source of Authority: What It Is Not**) today we want to look at it from a positive standpoint: **The Source of Authority: What It Is**

II. DISCUSSION:

1. **7** The Source of Authority: What It Is Not:

- A. In our last lesson we looked at sources of authority that are not legitimate sources of religious authority:

- (1) The doctrine and practices of the Old Testament: Col. 2:14; Gal. 5:4; Rom. 15:4.
- (2) What the pastor (or preacher) says: 2 Tim. 4:2
- (3) Creeeds (catechisms) of men: Matt. 15:9; Col. 2:21-22
- (4) The desires of the congregation: Ex. 32:1; 1 Sam. 8:4-5; Isa. 55:8-9
- (5) The elders of the local church: 1 Pet. 5:2-3; Acts 20:28
- (6) The results accomplished/good works: remember Nadab & Abihu? (Lev. 10:1-2) Uzzah? (2 Sam. 6:1) “workers of iniquity” (Matt. 7:21-23)

B. Today we want to examine **The Source of Authority: What It Is**

2. **8** Jesus Christ is the source of divine authority:

A. **Jesus is God’s ordained spokesman**: Matt. 17:1-5

Heb. 1:1-2: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;”

- (1) God requires us to absolutely, unequivocally requires us to “hear Him”:

Deut. 18:18-19: “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. 19 And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.”

Peter quotes this in his sermon in Acts 3; then follows it with these words:

Acts 3:24-26: “Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. 25 You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' 26 To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.”

- (2) Importantly, Jesus derives His authority from the Father:

Jn. 12:49: “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. 14:10: “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.”

- (3) That’s why He said this: **Jn. 12:48**: “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.”

B. **9** Jesus has “all authority”: **Matt. 28:18**: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”

- (1) Jesus doesn’t have “some” authority, or “a great deal” of authority: He has “All authority...in heaven and on earth”!

- (2) He did not take “all authority” illegitimately; it “has been given” to Him by the Father: Matt. 28:18

1 Cor. 15:27: “For ‘He has put all things under His feet. But when He says ‘all things are put under Him,’ it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted.”

Jn. 3:35: “The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.”

Heb. 2:8: “‘You have put all things in subjection under his feet.’ For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him.”

(3) He alone possesses this great power!

1 Tim 6:15: “He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords,”

- (a) The word “Potentate” is from the word family of *dunamis*; meaning “power”; it is the word from which we get *dynamite*.
- (b) When it comes to religious authority there is only one “Potentate”; Jesus Christ!
- (c) But that is contrary to the false view many claiming to be Christians have of Jesus:
 - (i) They view Him as “Mr. Milquetoast” (i.e., petting the lamb; cf. Rev. 6:12).
 - (ii) They fail to see Him as “*the Lion of the tribe of Judah*”! Rev. 5:5; cf. 2 Thess. 1:7-9

C. **10** Jesus is the king raised to sit on David’s throne:

(1) God made a very important promise to David about a 1,000 years before Jesus was born: **2 Sam. 7:16:** “And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.” (Zedekiah; 586 B.C.)

(a) His Kingship was the subject of many prophecies: Psa. 2:6; Isa. 9:6-7; 32:1-2

Jer. 23:5: “Behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.”

Zech. 9:9: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.” (cf. Matt. 21:5)

(b) That’s one reason why the genealogy of Jesus was so important; i.e., to prove He was a descendant of David (Matt. 1:2-17; Lk. 2:4; 3:23-38).

(c) That’s why Herod was so concerned and tried to kill the baby Jesus: Matt. 2:1-8

(d) That’s why Nathanael exclaimed: **Jn. 1:49:** “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

(e) That’s why during Jesus’ “triumphant entry” into Jerusalem the people shouted: **Jn. 12:13:** “Hossanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! The King of Israel!” (hosanna means “save now”)

(f) That’s why Jesus answered Pilate’s question the way He did:

Lk. 23:3: “Then Pilate asked Him, saying, ‘Are You the King of the Jews?’ He answered him and said, ‘It is as you say.’”

Jn. 18:37: “Pilate therefore said to Him, ‘Are You a king then?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.’”

(g) That’s why Pilate had this inscription put on the cross: “JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.” (Jn. 19:19)

(h) That’s why Jesus was resurrected from the grave: **Acts 2:30-31:** “Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, 31 he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.” (1 Tim. 6:15)

(i) That’s why Jesus ascended into heaven to sit at God’s right hand: **Dan. 7:13-14:**

“I was watching in the night visions,
 And behold, One like the Son of Man,
 Coming with the clouds of heaven!
 He came to the Ancient of Days,
 And they brought Him near before Him.
 I 4 Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom,
 That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.
 His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
 Which shall not pass away,
 And His kingdom the one
 Which shall not be destroyed.” (cf. Heb. 1:3; 8:1)

(2) **II** Even though David’s house had fallen down; God promised to rebuild it:

Acts 15:16: “After! this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up...” (quoting Amos 9:11-12)

(a) That’s why the main point of the very first gospel sermon was this:

Acts 2:29-32: “Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, 31 he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. 32 This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.”

Acts 2:36: “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

(b) That’s why Paul said this in **I Corinthians 15:24-26:** “Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.”

(3) Side note:

(a) Recall the parable of the “minas”:

Lk. 19:12: “Therefore He said: ‘A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.’”

(b) The church is a “kingdom”: **Col. 1:13:** “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,”

(i) That means that its “form of government” is a monarchy.

(ii) In America we tend to frame every decision in the terms of democracy; everything has to be put up to a vote (e.g., the constant polling on various issues).

(iii) But, the kingdom, or church, is not a democracy; it is a monarchy.

(iv) In a monarchy, the king has absolute and complete authority!

(v) Thus, what we teach and practice is not up for “majority vote” (Matt. 17:5; 28:18).

(vi) **Lk. 19:12:** “But his citizens hated him...saying, ‘We will not have this man to reign over us.’”

D. 12 Jesus is the head of the church:

- (1) The “body” and the “church” are one and the same:

Col. 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.”

- (2) Jesus is the “head of the body”:

Eph. 1:22-23: “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

(a) Members of our physical bodies are in subjection to the “head” (explain).

(b) As members of Christ’s body, the church; we are to be in subjection to the head:

Eph. 5:22-24: “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”

(c) The church is the bride of Christ and must be in total subjection to Him.

(d) An earthly husband might demand his wife to do what is contrary to God’s will.

(e) But Christ will never make such a demand on His bride, the church.

E. **13** All must be done in Jesus’ name:

- (1) Since Jesus is:

- ☛ “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15),
- ☛ “head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” (Eph. 1:22-23)

- (2) It should be no great surprise that it follows, as logically as night follows day, that all we do must be done “in Jesus name”?

Col. 3:17: “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

(a) The word “whatsoever” is an intensive form of whatever; which means everything!

(b) Paul doubles down on that concept in the second clause of the verse: “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do **all** in the name of the Lord Jesus...”

(c) We can teach or practice no doctrine unless it is authorized by the Lord (i.e., New Testament; **2 Jn. 9:** “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.”).

(d) “whatsoever” includes whatever we “do in word or deed”:

(i) “word” is from Greek *logos*; it includes what we say and the concepts and ideas we think/hold/teach (Vine).

(ii) “deed” is from Greek *ergon*; refers to actions; what we practice (Vine).

(e) So, we can only say, think, teach and act as Christ has authorized; His authority covers the entirety of our lives!

(f) Some are not content with this; they think as long as they are sincere; as long as it meets their definition of what is good and right, that God just has to accept it!

- (g) Think about that for a moment: surely we can see how arrogant and wrong that attitude is! Matt. 7:21-23

3. **14** Application:

- A. To fully understand these principles, we must illustrate it by making an application: i.e., “How does this work?”
- B. The New Testament clearly gives a pattern for the work of the church.
- C. The Lord’s church is the “*spiritual house*” (1 Pet. 2:5) “*purchased with His own blood*” (Acts 20:28) and the Lord has given His “*spiritual house*” a threefold mission (Acts 2:42; Eph. 4:11)

(1) ****** Evangelism:

- (a) In the realm of evangelism we find the pattern of local churches preaching the gospel as Paul praised the church at Thessalonica, “*For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Achaia, but also in every place.*” (1 Thess. 1:8)
- (b) As part of this pattern we also find how the church supported gospel preachers.
- (i) Funds were sent from the church directly to preachers in the field (Phil. 4:15-16; 2 Cor. 11:8).
- (ii) In New Testament times, local churches did not build institutions (e.g., missionary society) to do its work of evangelism, nor did local churches relinquish oversight of their evangelistic work to a “sponsoring church” (see Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2)
- (iii) The church was, and remains even today, entirely sufficient regarding any of its God-given work, including the work of evangelism!
- (c) Furthermore, churches in the New Testament did not use “bait and switch” tactics as it preached the gospel.
- (i) It did not go into a community and provide food and drink or fun and frolic, and then preach the gospel.
- (ii) In the first century they were not “*ashamed of the gospel of Christ*” (Rom. 1:16).
- (iii) They understood “*the power of God to salvation*” was found only in “*the gospel of Christ*”; “*For in it [i.e., “the gospel of Christ”] the righteousness of God is revealed*” (Rom. 1:17).
- (iv) Just like Jesus, they preached “*Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth to everlasting life*” (Jn. 6:27).
- (v) Follow the career of the apostle Paul in the book of Acts: He did not first try to meet the physical necessities of his audience, nor offer them ‘food, fun and frolic.’ He simply, but boldly, offered the “*living water*” & “*bread of life*” of God’s Word.

(2) ****** Edification:

- (a) This is the spiritual word of building up the faith of Christians (Eph. 4:15-16).
- (b) It has nothing to do with things of a secular or physical nature (e.g., secular education, recreation, social intercourse).

(3) ****** Benevolence:

- (a) This involves caring for the needs of destitute saints.

- (b) Every example of the church providing aid to the needy was always limited to “needy saints” (Acts 4:34; cf. Acts 2:44-47; 6:1ff; 11:27-30; Rom. 15:25-26; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8 & 9).
 - (c) Importantly: as individual Christians we have a tremendous responsibility toward “all men” as it concerns “charity” (Gal. 6:10; Matt. 25:31-46).
- D. So many seek to involve the church in realms of operation in which God has not given it and demand it be so.
- (1) No matter how “good” we might think these “extracurricular” activities are; it is wrong to involve the Lord’s church in them!
 - (2) To do so is to “*transgress and...not abide in the doctrine of Christ*”!
 - (3) If we do that, we “*do not have God*”!
 - (4) It’s serious folks!

III. CONCLUSION: 15

1. Jesus is God’s ordained spokesman in this, the final age (Matt. 17:5; Heb. 1:1-2).
 - A. He has “*All authority...in heaven and on earth*” (Matt. 28:18).
 - B. That means that EVERYTHING we think, say, teach and do MUST be “*in the name of the Lord Jesus*” (Col. 3:17; i.e., according to His authority!).
2. To do otherwise is the epitome of arrogance and disobedience (2 Jn. 9; Matt. 7:21-23).
3. It just won’t do for us to think, teach or act on our own authority and think God will be impressed and satisfied with our “sincerity” and “love.”

1 Cor. 2:9-10: “*But as it is written:*
 ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
 Nor have entered into the heart of man
 The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’

10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” (Jn. 14:15; 2 Jn. 2:3-5)
4. May we never forget or fail to apply these important principles!

Adapted from the workbook *A Study of Authority* by Billy W. Moore (pp. 24-25).