

Respecting Bible Authority

Most religious division is caused by either ignorance of or a lack of respect for the word of God and the authority of Christ. In this article, we will be doing a study of the true standard of Divine authority.

First, we need to establish that Christ has all right to rule. Jesus said in Matthew 28:18, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on Earth." Christ's authority is revealed to us in the New Testament. Paul spoke in 1 Corinthians 14:37, "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandments." The Bible is God's final and complete revelation to man. Paul reminds Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

Second, we need to realize that God expects men to respect what He says! God tells his people in Deuteronomy 4:2, "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." John said in 2 John 9, "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son." We have some examples left to us from Scripture to help us understand God's strictness. In Genesis 2 and 3, Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit and were driven from the garden of Eden for not respecting God's command. In Leviticus 10:1-2, we read of two priests named Nadab and Abihu. They offered "strange fire" which they had no authority to do and were killed. In 1 Chronicles 13:1-14, David incurred the anger of God for moving the ark of the covenant in an unauthorized manner. We need to always have a respect for our heavenly Father and His holy Word.

Third, God's will can be understood. We are expected to understand it. In Ephesians 3:4, Paul tells us, "By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ." Paul also tells us in Ephesians 5:17, "So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." Do you think that God would give us a book to read, believe, and obey and then make it too hard to understand? Now, this does not mean that the Bible reads as a first grade level. It simply means that with study, you can understand what God expects of you without some special anointing of God, or degree from a seminary, or having to unquestionably rely on a church or a preacher.

Let's look at some wrong standards of authority that many appeal to in religion. Let's start with our conscience. In religious matters, many people just let their conscience be their guide. Our conscience is what tells us whether we are doing right or wrong based upon what we have been taught. If we have been taught wrong, our conscience is wrong and may approve what is condemned in the eyes of God and condemn what is approved. Personal experiences and feelings can lead one astray, yet many are guided by them. Even Paul was guided by his conscience, but did many things which were

religiously wrong. Paul tells us in Acts 26:9, "So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."

We also can't rely on the wisdom of men. God's way and our way are very different. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 1:21, "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." This will eliminate all man-made creed books as standards we should hold to.

We also have to realize that the majority can be wrong. Just because the majority may do a thing does not make it right. In Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus preaches, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it." Noah and his family, only eight people, were the only ones that were saved when the great flood came. In 1 Kings 18:17-19, we read about the prophet Elijah standing up against 850 prophets of Baal.

The only standard of authority for today is Christ's will in the New Testament. In the judgment to come, we will be judged by the gospel of Christ. We need to go to the Bible each and every day and read for ourselves what we need to do to be pleasing to God.

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