

## Is the “Need” for Authority a Biblical Concept: Discussion One

### *What Did the Jesus Think About Authority?*

#### **Intro:**

I. Is the question of Authority a dead issue? Why continue to study it? How often should it be studied?

A. Well, before being discussed in the 50's, it was discussed in the 40s, and the 30s, and the 20's, etc.

B. The questions of do we need authority and how do we get it will never be outdated, or questions to be dropped: It is *fundamental*. When do you do away with the fundamentals?

C. Some may think of “Authority” as a question among modern “Churches of Christ”. And while it may (in our world) have been most heatedly, and seriously discussed in the past century among our brethren, it is hardly an issue that is confined to those that we would say are members of the Church:

1. Do members of different denominations consider authority to be important?

Historically I'd say yes:

a) The Catholic church certainly does, they authority comes from the Bible, The Pope, and Church Tradition.

b) Many ministers of long established denominations would have said yes, whether that be Baptist, Methodist, or otherwise:

c) Contrary to what you may think or have heard, even our brethren in “institutional” churches appealed to authority:

(i) If you spend much time at all reading transcripts from the various discussions, both sides began with a brief description of authority and how to establish it

2. The point is this; for a very long time most everyone agreed that we needed Biblical authority for our actions in the Church-- the point of difference was how to apply it: *(One might find sufficient scriptural justification for a gymnasium or a day care, appealing to taking care of one need or another, while one another, applying principles differently would fail to find authority for such things)*

3. But over the past few decades, both within the Church and in the denominational world, there has been a steady shift away from this attitude, resulting in many abandoning the notion that Authority is required at all:

a) What you may ask would lead to this destination?

(i) Consider this: If you hold that you absolutely must have Authority for what a congregation does, but in your searching of the scriptures you meet a dead end (a scripture that irrefutably states that your position is incorrect) what choices do you have?

(a) You can change your practice

(b) You can state that the passage in question doesn't apply

i) Why would a passage no longer apply? There are a few legitimate cases of this, but we are speaking of a clear case of "I want to do X, the Bible says do not do X..."

ii) The easiest way for many (speaking in general terms) has been to simply state that the New Testament is not only Authoritative, but was never meant to be:

D. I realize that we've raised several different questions as we've begun, and we will look at these in the following weeks:

1. We are certainly going to look at the principles of establishing authority. We are also going to look at some of the questions being posed in today's circles: Is the New Testament a pattern? How do I know when a passage applies to me today? What does it mean to respect God's Word?

2. But for this morning, I want to spend the rest of our time introducing the question of "Is Establishing Authority a Biblical Principle"

### **I. What Did Jesus Think of Authority?**

a. I think that this is a good place to start, not only because we are to look to Christ as our example in all things, but because a "casual appeal to Jesus" is what is most often made by the religious world around us: "We need to pay more attention to the words written in red!" To that I would state a hearty AMEN!

i. I want to first consider the passage of **John 12:42-50**

- i. This passage records a rebuke from Jesus to a group of unbelieving listeners. As you read, consider some of the reasons that Jesus did not rebuke them for:
  - a. v 37 states that he did many miracles yet they did not believe: Yet Jesus doesn't scold them for not believing on account of the great signs that he did:
  - b. Jesus was the perfect example: He lived a guiltless life and there was no better example of righteousness to be found: And yet they were not rebuked because they were not moved by His perfect example:
  - c. Jesus was unparalleled as a teacher, and yet they were not chastised because of the quality of His teaching:
  - d. Jesus says in v 48 that they would be rejected in Judgment not simply because of His Words, but because what He spoke came from the Father
    - i. Jesus spoke "just as the Father" told Him; and according to Jesus, *that* is what gave it any importance:
- ii. Let's consider a second passage as well: **Matthew 28:18-20**
  - i. When Jesus commissioned His followers, He did so on the basis that He had been given the Authority to do it:
    - a. That would lead me to ask the question, If authority isn't an important issue, then why would Jesus make mention of His possession of it in the first place?
    - b. This right to command wasn't based on His resurrection (although it would testify) It wasn't based on the ascension that He was about to undertake (although again, it would testify) It was based on His possession of Authority: An authority that Jesus again pointed to as coming from the Father:
      - i. He never claimed Authority from an other source than from God
      - ii. It was Authority for His actions was of the utmost importance, not just the claim to it, but its source as well:

## 2. What Did Jesus Expect Others to Think Regarding Authority?

- a. It is always worth pointing out that when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness that He answered each question with a quotation from scripture: But this was not a personal choice that Jesus made for Himself, that He didn't expect from anyone else:
- b. Consider the question that was posed to Jesus by the Lawyer in Luke 10:25-26
  - i. The lawyer posed the question of what are the conditions of Eternal Life:
  - ii. Jesus' immediate response was "what does the Law say"
    - i. There is virtually the same exchange in Matthew 19. When the Pharisees come to challenge Jesus and ask in v 3 on what grounds they could divorce their wives, Jesus again responds with an immediate "have you not read?" and would go on to appeal to the scripture of Genesis chapter 2
- c. Did you notice that in both of these examples, Jesus' reaction wasn't limited to simply showing that you get Authority from the scripture, but that it was an obvious fact:
  - i. *What does it say: Haven't you read?*
  - ii. Jesus recognized that He required Authority from the Father for any action: Otherwise His commands and teachings were meaningless:
  - iii. What Jesus thought about Authority should settle any question about whether or not we need it; But these principles are found throughout the writings of the Apostles.
    - i. Next week we are going to look at what the Apostles thought about Authority, and whether they expected their writings to be a pattern for us today.