

Authority

Why does understanding Bible authority matter?

Many people look around and see all the different churches around us and wonder why there are so many. It seems that there is a different church on every street in town. If there is one God and one Bible, why are there so many different churches? The answer comes down to one word, "authority". Different understandings about the authority of God, the authority of the Bible in our lives, and how to determine that authority is the reason for different churches. Understanding what authority is and how to determine it properly will help us all serve God in unity.

What is authority?

Jesus made the following statement at Matthew 28:18 before He ascended back into Heaven: "All _____ has been given to Me in heaven and on _____."

Authority is such an important topic that Jesus used some of His final moments with the apostles to speak of it. Authority at its most basic is defined as "power". Jesus is telling the apostles that He has all power, the right to give commands to all creation. Jesus tells us through this statement that there are commands for us to follow that He gave. It is by virtue of the facts that He is God and that He purchased us that He has authority over us.

"Behold, the virgin shall be with _____ and shall bear a _____, and they shall call His name _____," which translated means, "_____." (Matthew 1:23)

"...you were not redeemed with perishable things like _____ or _____ from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious _____, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of _____." (I Peter 1:18-19)

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How is Christ's authority made known today?

God has spoken to us in different ways throughout time. In Old Testament times He spoke to us through patriarchs like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and through prophets like Isaiah and Elijah. However, today He speaks to us through His Son, Jesus Christ.

“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the _____ in many portions and in _____, in these last days has spoken to us in _____, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.” (Hebrews 1:1-2)

How then do we get the words of Christ today? It is not through any kind of supernatural revelation. Christ is not speaking words into our ears or minds. Jesus speaks to us today through His word, the Bible.

“If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I _____ to you are the Lord's _____.” (I Corinthians 14:37)

The Bible tells us what God wants us to do. God revealed His wishes to Jesus, who sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles. The apostles then wrote what the Spirit told them to write, forming our New Testament.

How serious is God about His commands in the Bible?

While most people today that respect the Bible think the Bible is the word of God, their respect for its seriousness differs. Our thoughts about the serious nature of the Bible are really irrelevant. What matters is how God views His commands. The Bible makes clear that God takes His commands and our failure to obey them as serious.

“Anyone who goes too far and does not _____ in the _____ of Christ, _____; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.” (II John 9)

We see from this verse that if we do not abide by the commands that are found in our Bible, then we do not have God! Having God and keeping commands are linked.

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God shows us through a number of examples that He expects commands He has given to be obeyed. In all of the following examples God has given a command and subsequently punished people that disobeyed. Consider these examples:

1. Adam and Eve had to leave the garden after eating the fruit. (Genesis 2-3)
2. Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire and were killed. (Leviticus 10:1-2)
3. Moses struck the rock and could not enter Canaan land. (Numbers 20:7-12)

Can we even understand the Bible?

It is common for people to think that it is impossible for the average person to understand the Bible. This faulty thinking has been perpetuated by denominations. However, the men in the New Testament expected that people could read what they wrote and do as they were expected to do.

“By referring to this, when you _____ you _____ my insight into the mystery of Christ.” (Ephesians 3:4)

Do you think God, who loves us enough to send His Son to die so we could have the forgiveness of our sins, would give us a book that is too difficult to understand and then condemn us for not doing so? _____

What are some false authorities that people look to religiously?

While Jesus makes clear that the only religious authority for us is the Bible, sometimes people look to other standards of authority. Here are a few examples of false standards and the problem with trying to use them.

People’s Wisdom - The main problem with this is that men can be wrong and often are. Some people trust in their own wisdom while others trust in the wisdom of other people. Consider the following examples that outline the problem with trusting in people’s wisdom, even our own.

“There is a way which _____ right to a man, But its end is the way of _____.”
(Proverbs 14:12)

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“so that your faith would not rest on the _____ of _____, but on the _____ of _____.” (I Corinthians 2:5)

This would include the majority and even our parents. Just because most people think it is right or even our parents think it is right, it is not necessarily right.

God's Wisdom - It is even possible to misuse the Bible as a false standard of authority. Some misapply passages while others use old covenants as authority. While the Old Testament is in our Bibles, it is not our standard of authority today. Galatians 3:19 tells us that the Old Testament was only in effect “until the _____ would come to whom the promise had been made.” What does Galatians 3:16 identify as “the seed”? _____

How does the Bible tell us to use itself?

The Bible actually tells us how we are to understand it. When we are trying to determine if an activity is approved by God, there are three ways to find authority.

1. Is there a *direct statement*? This is when God explicitly states what He wants us to do. What direct statement do you find at Mark 16:15-16?

2. Is there an *approved example*? This is when God shows us what He wants us to do through an example approved by the apostles. What example do you find at Acts 20:7? _____

3. Is there a *necessary implication*? This is when God implies what He expects of us. What is necessary to infer from “coming up out of the water” at Mark 1:10? _____

It is also important to note that the silence of scripture is not freedom to do as we want. Silence prohibits. Hebrews 7:14 makes clear that Jesus could not be a priest because He was from the tribe of Judah. The Law did not have to say priests could not come from Judah. All it had to say was they come from Levi, excluding the rest.

These are not special Bible rules. They are simply the way we communicate with one another and God with us. We must establish authority for all we do.

The Covenants

Paul told Timothy at II Timothy 2:15 to “_____ to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, _____ the word of truth.” Other translations translate “be diligent” simply as “study”. Timothy was to diligently study so that he could correctly handle, or rightly divide as it is also translated, God’s word.

As we saw in the last lesson, denominations arise because of differing views on the topic of authority. Another big reason why there are differing denominations is due to misunderstanding the covenants and what applies to us today and in what way. If we are not careful with the covenants we will end up with a different gospel as was happening in the Galatian churches. There were people who were trying to bind Jewish traditions from the Old Covenant on the Gentile Christians. Paul warns them at Galatians 1:6-8.

“I am amazed that you are so quickly _____ Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a _____; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to _____ the _____ of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel _____ to what we have preached to you, he is to be _____!”

Handling the covenants accurately is important!

What are the covenants?

God spoke directly to the patriarchs and would sometimes set up a covenant with one of the patriarchs.

“I establish My _____ with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.” (Genesis 9:11)

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onto dry land he offers a sacrifice to the Lord and the Lord makes a covenant with him for mankind that another flood like this would never happen. This type of covenant making continued until the time of the Exodus.

At the time of the Exodus a nation existed and left Egyptian bondage. When they reached Sinai as led by the Lord, Moses went to the top of the mountain and received a new covenant. It was a covenant between God and the Israelites. We know this covenant today as the Old Testament or the Old Covenant.

“Then the Lord said to Moses, “_____ down these _____, for in accordance with these words I have made a _____ with you and with Israel.” (Exodus 34:27)

This covenant was to establish a law and relationship between Israel and Jehovah. It was designed to keep the nation intact until the Messiah, Jesus, would come from that nation. Paul is explaining this to the Galatians at 3:19. The Law was only to remain in effect until the “seed” came.

“Why the _____ then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, _____ the _____ would come to whom the promise had been made.” (Galatians 3:19)

Who is this seed? As we saw in the last lesson from Galatians 3:16, the seed is Jesus Christ. Thus we learn from this passage that the Old Covenant was only designed to remain in effect until Christ came. At that time a new covenant would be created and put into place.

The New Covenant was then put into place by Jesus Christ and goes from that time forward. It is the covenant that we are under today. This New Covenant was intended by God and is thus prophesied in the Old Testament.

“Behold, days are _____,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a _____ with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah”. (Jeremiah 31:31)

Jesus made clear when He was here on earth that He was here to establish a new covenant. It was a covenant that would be paid for by His own blood. In Luke 22

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“the Lord’s Supper”. Consider His words.

“And in the same way He took the _____ after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the _____ in My _____.” (Luke 22:20)

The apostles also realized that they were here to work as servants of a new covenant.

“Our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as _____ of a _____, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” (II Corinthians 3:5-6)

What happened to the Old Covenant?

We must consider what the word covenant means to properly answer this question. Webster’s dictionary defines “covenant” as “a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action”. Thus a covenant is essentially a contract. It is when two parties agree that each will do something for the other. The Old Covenant was an agreement entered into by Israel and Jehovah. Israel was to keep His commands and Jehovah would give them the promised land and bring forth the Messiah. When a contract is fulfilled, it is no longer in effect. Consider the following words of Jesus:

“Do not think that I came to _____ the _____ or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to _____.” (Matthew 5:17)

Thus when Jesus fulfilled the Law, it was no longer in effect as the contract was completed. The Hebrew writer words it as follows:

“When He said, “A new covenant,” He has made the _____ . But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is _____ .” (Hebrews 8:13)

We then see that the Old Covenant has been completed, is obsolete, and has disappeared.

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Someone may well wonder, "Why even study the Old Covenant? What good is it to us now if it has disappeared?" While it is true that we are no longer under the Old Covenant and that it is no longer law to us today, it is still of great value.

It Leads Us to Christ - "Therefore the _____ has become our _____ to lead us to Christ, so that we may be _____ by _____." (Galatians 3:24)

It Instructs Us - "For whatever was _____ in _____ was written for our _____, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have _____." (Romans 15:4)

The Old Covenant explains many of God's qualities to us and how He interacts with His people. It helps us to understand why Jesus came to this earth and did what He did. Without the Old Covenant to shed light on the New Covenant, we would not understand many things.

Why did God replace the Old Covenant?

The Old Covenant was inadequate. It was based on the sacrifices of animals. Since animals are not equivalent to people, those sacrifices were not sufficient to take away sin. Consider the following words from Hebrews 10:4:

"For it is _____ for the _____ of _____ and _____ to take away sins."

These animal sacrifices were simply placeholders. They were a temporary fix until Jesus could come to shed His blood, offering the adequate sacrifice.

"For this reason He is the mediator of a _____, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were _____ the _____, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." (Hebrews 9:15)

The New Covenant was needed because it is superior and the Old was inadequate. The blood of Jesus forgave the sins under the Old Covenant and paid the price for the New Covenant, washing away our sins also!