

Bible Authority

Matthew 21:23 “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?’”

The question in the passage above was asked to Jesus because the Jews understood the need for authority in spiritual matters. In John 12:49-50, Jesus explains that the source of his authority was from the Father in heaven, “*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. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.*” The same applies to us today. We must also have authority for what we practice and teach because in Matthew 7:21, Jesus said only those who do “*the will of my Father in heaven*” will enter the kingdom of heaven. After the resurrection of Jesus and before he ascended into heaven, he told his disciples that he had been given all authority on heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). As a result, we all will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to be judged (2 Corinthians 5:10) in the last day.

Ultimately, when we are obedient to the Lord, we show our love for him. Notice what is said in these passages: John 14:15, Jesus said, “*If you love me, keep My commandments*” and in 1 John 5:3 we are told, “*For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.*” Read John 14:21, 23 to understand what we must do to be loved by the Father and by Jesus.

So, given the fact that we must have authority for all that we do in this life, how do we determine exactly what we should believe and practice? Some claim that everything we practice spiritually is authorized unless it is prohibited in scripture. Others believe that only what is specifically written in scripture is authorized. There are some problems with both of these beliefs. The problem with believing that everything is authorized unless it is prohibited in the bible is that it conflicts with what the scriptures teach about authority. For instance in Colossians 3:17 we are told, “*Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*” This tells us we can only do those things that we have authority for as outlined by scripture. Can you imagine how many volumes the Bible would have to be, to literally list everything we should not do? The Lord has always given man clear instruction regarding what he expects, so he does not have to tell us what we should not do (2 Timothy 3:16-17). If the second belief were true, “that only what is specifically written in scripture is authorized,” then we would not be able to determine things like how often we should partake of the Lord’s Supper, if we can use expedients such as song books, etc.

To properly establish authority, we must be able to follow the **express commands** given in scripture, look at the examples of what early Christians practiced (**approved example**) and draw conclusions based on what is taught in scripture (**necessary inference**). In the next few lessons, we will consider these sources of authority.

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE BIBLE STUDY

1. Why must we have authority for all that we practice religiously?

2. Give some examples of what can happen to Christians and the church when there is no authority for what is practiced?

3. What was the source of the authority for Jesus? _____ What passages prove this? _____

4. How do we show our love for the Lord? _____

5. Under the Law of Moses, how did the children of Israel know what God expected them to do? Provide some passages that support your answer. _____

6. What is the source of authority for most people in the world today? How do you know?

7. What do we learn about authority from Colossians 2:8?

8. In John 14:21, 23 what are we told we must do to be loved by the Father and by Jesus?

9. What is wrong with the statement: “everything we practice spiritually is authorized unless it is prohibited in scripture”?

10. What is wrong with the statement: “only what is specifically written in scripture is authorized”?

11. What can we learn about authority from Galatians 6:6-9?

12. What do we learn from 2 John 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”

13. Is its ok to do what we feel is right? Why or why not?

14. Read Acts 26:9 and comment on what the danger is when we use human reasoning? _____

15. Read the following passages and explain the terms that are used to compare the knowledge of God with the knowledge of man (Psalm 94:11, Isaiah 55:9, 1 Corinthians 3:18-20) _____
