

## AUTHORITY: FROM HEAVEN OR MEN #2

(Matt 21:23-27)

A. We'll be considering the subject of Authority again this morning.

1. Last week I drew attention to the fact that the Chinese government has absolute (complete) authority over everyone in that nation.
2. And because God has allowed that government to wield such power, the Chinese people live in fear of their government, *which is not always a bad thing* (Rom 13:1-7).
  - a. A government's control of its people is only a bad thing, when it wants to prevent its people from following Jesus Christ.
3. But I wondered why more people don't have that kind of fear & respect for God.

B. We can be a little inconsistent when it comes to our view of government & its power over people.

1. I've heard people comment on how much they enjoyed the opening ceremonies at the Olympics.
2. But in the next breath they may condemn the form of government that made it possible.
3. That many people working together in unison could only be accomplished if everyone had the same mindset: *fear of their government & love for their country*.
4. It was THAT mindset among men that built the seven wonders of the ancient world, & many of us would like to see the remnants of those marvelous places.
5. Yet I doubt that we would have wanted to be subjects in the governments that designed those wonders & had them constructed.

6. And yet, they exist because government forced its will upon the people.
7. Government was successful in getting everyone to work together for the same cause.
8. Wait a minute! That sounds like what God commands of us (1 Cor 1:10); the only difference is that God will not force anyone to submit to the government of His Son – *even though God could do the world over what the Chinese government does to its people.*
9. God could be an oppressive Authority Figure over all men, but what He chose to do is to make an appeal of love to the human family to hear the gospel & to come in obedient faith to His Son for their salvation from sin.

**John 3:16-17** – For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

C. **As I mentioned** last week, a study of Authority lies at the foundation of everything we believe, teach & practice as Christians & as a local church.

1. From the many examples we have in the Old & New Testaments, we are to learn that our every thought & action must be subject to the Authority of God’s Word – *which we will talk about in detail as the lesson progresses.*
2. Authority: “the power/right to give commands, enforce obedience, take action, or make final decisions” (Webster’s).

[All Authority stems from the Authority of God (Matt 21:23-27; Rom 13), & yet some earthly authorities will not recognize the Authority of God.]

## I. AUTHORITY IS ESSENTIAL & INESCAPABLE

- A. **The enemies** of Jesus understood the need for authority, & that it must come from the right source.

**Matt 21:23** – Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests & the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, & said, “**By what authority** are You doing these things? And **who gave You this authority?**”  
24 But Jesus answered & 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?**”

## B. **Authority** is essential & inescapable.

1. God’s Nature Possesses Authority
2. Man’s Nature Requires Authority
3. Rejecting Authority There Is Disorder
4. Accepting Authority There Is Salvation

## C. **And yet** people seem to look for Authority in all the wrong places, i.e. in men rather than God.

1. Human Wisdom or Intuition (**Jer 10:23**)
2. Creeds – Doctrinal Statements (**Matt 15:9**)
3. Desires Of The Members (Majority rule)
4. Traditions & Long Standing Practice (**Matt 15:6**)
5. Preacher/Elders (“My elders/preacher decided”)
6. Silence of Scripture (“The Bible doesn’t say not to”)
7. Results Accomplished (“The ends justify the means”; It didn’t for Moses: **Num 20:11**)

[These arguments are often used to justify many religious practices, but the Authority to act in the worship & service of God can only come from Him.]

## II. WHAT IS THE TRUE SOURCE OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY?

A. **God** (Judge of all the earth, **Gen 18:25**; Judge of all, **Heb 12:23**)

B. **Jesus**: (**Heb 1:1-2**; **Matt 28:18**)

C. **Holy Spirit**: The Spirit of Truth (**John 15:26**; **16:13**)

D. **Apostles**: (**Lk 10:16**; **John 16:13**)

E. **New Testament**: (**2 Pet 1:16-21**; **1 Cor 14:37**)

[The Bible, the Word of God is *authoritative, complete & sufficient* to communicate His will to us.]

### III. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF GOD'S AUTHORITY?

A. **Is it Subjective?** “Of, affected by, or produced by the mind or a particular state of mind; of or resulting from the feelings or temperament of the subject or person thinking” (Webster’s).

1. Peter told us that the expression of God’s Authority (Scripture) is not “of any private interpretation” or “personal origin” (2 Pet 1:20).

B. **It is Objective** - “of or having to do with a known or perceived object” (Webster’s).

1. What is that known object?
  - a. It’s the Bible, the Word of God
  - b. Specifically, the NT of Jesus Christ
  - c. The gospel of Christ.

**Rom 1:16-17** – For I am not ashamed of *the gospel of Christ*, for it *is the power of God to salvation* for everyone who believes, for the Jew first & also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “*The just shall live by faith.*”

**Jude 3** – Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for *the faith which was once for all delivered* to the saints.

[And because the nature of God’s Authority is found in an objective standard, then it is possible for us to do as Paul commanded in 1 Corinthians 1:10.]

### IV. HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND & ACT UPON GOD'S AUTHORITY?

A. **How can we** determine, from the Bible, what we have the right to believe & practice?

B. **God speaks** to us in the same way that we speak to one another; *and that makes sense because He made us in His image.*

-- How do we communicate our desires to each other?

## 1. Direct Statement or Command –

Let's say that you are an employer with authority over three employees. If you want them to sweep the floor at 5:00 p.m. every day, there are two ways you can express that verbally.

"This floor needs to be swept every day at 5 o'clock."

"I command each of you to sweep this floor every day at 5 o'clock, & if you don't I'll have to let you go."

... So does God (Acts 2:38; 17:31; 1 Pet 2:11; Col 3:9; Gal 5:16-21; 1 Cor 11:22).

## 2. Examples –

Let's say that you hire a fourth person to work for you. When he sees the other three employees sweeping the floor at 5 o'clock while you are looking on, what would a reasonably intelligent person do? He's going to follow their example.

... So does God (Phil 3:17; 4:9).

## 3. Necessary Conclusion –

When that fourth employee went to work the second day, once again he saw the other three employees begin to sweep the floor at 5 o'clock. That is when he made a necessary conclusion. "This must be what our employer wants us to do every day at this time."

... So does God (Acts 15:7-21; 1 Cor 11:26; Ac 20:6-7).

[This is not a theological formula invented by members of the church; these are the basic rules of communication.]

If people would approach Bible study with same common sense they use in every day communication, then we could all read & understand the God's word alike.]

### CLOSING:

- **God's authority** must be the basis of everything we do as individual Christians & collectively as a church.
- **It is vital** that we understand the nature of God's authority over us if we hope to please Him & be accepted by Him.