



CAPITOL COMMISSION

A Word About The Word--Authority

JULY 7, 2010

Paul Meinsen / PO Box 891, Jefferson City, MO 65102 / www.capitolcom.org / paul.meinsen@capitolcom.org

Picture this oft repeated scenario: A child tells his or her sibling to “Stop it.” The other typically responds with “Oh yeah, who says?” If the name “mom” or “dad” is dropped, then the offender will at least stop a moment to think about his or her actions (does not mean obedience will follow, but at least a reflection). It is the same with adults. People ask “What right do you have to say this is right or wrong?” Or “Who do you think you are telling me this?” Or they state “How dare you judge me!” Sometimes these questions and comments are proper. Other times, they are just a sign of a rebellious heart that does not desire to adhere to any authority figure over them.

Over the last month or so, we have been discussing the various characteristics the Bible declares about itself. We have seen that the Bible is God’s written revelation of Himself and His works; it also reveals to us who we are as people and our condition. We have seen that the Bible is inspired. God’s Holy Spirit guided men in such a way that they wrote down what God wanted revealed. Because of its inspiration, the Bible is also inerrant—without errors in the things it teaches.

The next characteristic of Scripture to address has to do with the aspect of AUTHORITY. The Bible declares its authority and in this study, we want to ask the question “Says who?” Imagine asking this book, “What right do you have to tell us this?” We will find in an examination that the Bible’s inspiration gives it the license to make this declaration.

INTRODUCTION

“Authority” is used in a variety of ways in the English language. It can be used in reference to the police or other law enforcing agencies. It is used to describe someone who is an expert or has accomplished much in a particular field. It also describes a manner in which someone accomplished something—they can barely get by or finish “with authority” or certainty. And authority can be the permission given to someone; like a pastor who says “By the power vested to me by the state of Missouri, I now pronounce you man and wife.” One dictionary defines “authority” as the “power or right to enforce obedience; moral or legal supremacy; right to command or give a final decision.”²

As stated in the opening remarks, we want to ask the Bible: What gives it the right and power to command or give a final decision? On what basis does it have moral or legal supremacy and be considered “authoritative” over all other “religious” or philosophical writings?

I. GOD’S AUTHORITY

Simply put, the authority of God gives authority to His Word. The Bible is “God-breathed” (2 Tim. 3:16); written by men who were moved along—like a ship moved by the wind upon the water—by God’s Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20-21). Therefore giving assurance that what is written is the truth and teaches nothing false. And thus places the authority of God behind its commands, assertions and declarations.

Three facts make the authority of God unquestionable. The first is that God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1; cf. Job 38; Psa. 8:3; 19:1-6; Isa. 40:12). Second, God sustains, controls and owns everything in His creation (Psa. 24:1). Third, “in the end God consumes it all in that He declared, ‘Behold, I am making all things new’ (Rev. 21:5).”³ Stated in another way, God has authority over all things because He made all things, owns all things and will do as He pleases with all things.

God’s authority is seen throughout Scripture in His various names and titles (Gen. 1:1; Ex. 3:13-14; Gen. 17:1-2; Deut. 10:17; Psa. 23:1). It is seen in His nature and attributes. It is also implied in His various works of judgment. Even though people have the ability to attack and disobey God’s authority, they will be held accountable for their actions.

Various attempts have been made to undermine the authority of God. Some just flat out say He doesn’t exist. Others will claim that He may exist, but really did not create the universe as written in Scripture. Others may acknowledge God’s existence and creation, but believe He is now sitting back and seeing how things will turn out. By observing culture and society, though, it seems that the vast majority simply ignores God’s claims and they live as if they have authority—doing whatever is right in their own eyes.

Regardless of popular opinion, God has not relinquished His authority. He alone has the original and ultimate authority. Dr. Richard Mayhue put it well when he wrote:

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS & STAFF: WEDNESDAYS @ 12NOON, HEARING ROOM #1
ATTORNEY GENERAL’S OFFICE: THURSDAYS @ 7AM, BROADWAY BUILDING 3RD FLOOR CAFETERIA

PROCLAIMING THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

Missouri

A Word About The Word--Authority

God did not inherit His authority—there was no one to bequeath it to Him. God did not receive His authority—there was no one to bestow it on Him. God’s authority did not come by way of an election—there was no one to vote for Him. God did not seize His authority—there was no one to steal it from. God did not earn His authority—it was already His.⁴

Therefore, when the authority of Scripture is called into question, God Himself is actually being called into question.

A number of attempts to undermine God’s authority were listed above. Another attempt that is quite prevalent in the church today is to discredit the inspiration and truthfulness of the Bible. If the Bible can be shown to be written by men only and filled with errors, then there can be no justification for believing that it has an authority over anything else written by men. In earlier Capitol Commission Missouri studies, though, we addressed the Bible’s claim to inspiration and inerrancy and have shown that these claims are legitimate and the evidence within Scripture strongly supports its declarations.⁵ The attempt to discredit the Scripture in this manner falls short.

II. APPLICATION FROM AUTHORITY

So how does this relate to our lives here on earth? I want to point out three main points of application (even though there could many others).

1. Since God is the authority over all, the Bible is not just the book for the “Christian Religion” but rather holds authority over all people and is to be heeded by all people. It is not just one of a choice of possible spiritual authorities. It is the exclusive authoritative word of God.⁶

This teaching may not set well with some people. But if the Bible is to be taken as it is written, it makes itself exclusive. Anything less makes the Bible out to be a book of fairy tales—not even worthy to be considered a “good religious book” which can help with someone’s “spiritual journey.”

2. The Bible is the standard of truth. It is that which judges what is right and what is wrong. It is to be considered truth for discussions concerning our beginnings, the problems and solutions for men, the purpose for our existence, the culmination of history, etc. If a philosophy or idea conflicts with Scripture, the Bible is to be the ruler by which the other must conform. One is not allowed to make the Bible come into an agreement with his or her thoughts.

3. The Bible’s declaration of how one is to be saved is the one that is correct. There are not various and sundry ways of approaching God.

There is only one—through His Son, Jesus Christ. *I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me*, states Jesus (John 14:6). Peter declared about Jesus, *And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved* (Acts 4:12). The Sovereign King of the Universe has proclaimed this is the way of reconciliation to Him. Let’s be blunt: If one desires to go to Heaven, the only road is through Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture.

Again, this does not “play nice” in our world of syncretism and tolerance. The Bible makes exclusive claims on the nature of true religion and that which pleases God. If one truly believes its claims, then he or she must understand everything else that sets itself up against the Word of God—whether it be another religion, differing worldview, or sinful practice—is false and needs to be exposed (2 Cor. 10:3-6). Don’t be mistaken, this is not just a man’s conclusion; this is the very nature of truth. Truth itself is exclusive to everything false. And the authoritative word of God is true:

Psalm 119:160 *The sum of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.*

CONCLUSION

One logical conclusion to the truth that the Bible is inspired by God is that it holds authority concerning the things it declares. It is authoritative because the One who inspired it has all authority. Do not find yourself against it, friend—rather submit to its truth, obey its commands and find much refreshment and delight in the promises it gives (Psa. 119:43).

¹ This study was originally written while the author served with Capitol Ministries™.

² *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v., “authority.” Cited by Richard Mayhue, “The Authority of Scripture,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 15/2 (Fall 2004): 228.

³ *Ibid.*, 229.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 228.

⁵ See “A Word About the Word—Inspiration” and “A Word About the Word—Inerrant”

(www.capitolcom.org/ministries/Missouri/Studies.aspx).

⁶ Someone may object by pointing out the other religions have “God-inspired” writings, such as the book of Mormon and the Qumran and they should have the same level of respect and authority. But if these books are tested with the same tests as we have noted in earlier studies, they are shown to be contradictory in their message and false in a number of their facts. Only the Bible has been shown to have no demonstrable errors and contradictions (See Charles C. Ryrie, “The Importance of Inerrancy” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 120.478 (Apr/June 1963): 137-44).

Since it contains the authoritative words of God and His spokesmen, it carries His divine authority. This record of God speaking is the final word on all matters of faith and practice. The Bible, therefore, is a book that is both human and divine; it is God's Word written by human beings. Finally, we must emphasize that the idea of an authoritative, divinely inspired Scripture is not something that the church invented; it is the testimony of the biblical writers themselves. Therefore, the words of the Bible should be believed and obeyed.

Word definition: A word is a single unit of language that can be represented in writing or speech. In | Meaning, pronunciation, translations and examples. The words stood out clearly on the page. The word 'ginseng' comes from the Chinese word 'Shen-seng'. ...swear words. Do you enjoy word puzzles? There is no word from the authorities on the reported attack. [+ from]. Word has been spreading fast of the incidents on the streets. Both men sent word that they had retired for the evening. Authority is the ability of a person or an organization to conduct a certain lifestyle for another person or a group. Authority is known as one of the basis of society and stands against cooperation. Adopting lifestyle patterns as a result of authority is called obedience and authority as a concept includes most leadership cases. Although authority is usually described as human there is also frequent mention of divine authority. In linguistics, a word of a spoken language can be defined as the smallest sequence of phonemes that can be uttered in isolation with objective or practical meaning. In many languages, words also correspond to sequences of graphemes ("letters") in their standard writing systems that are delimited by spaces wider than the normal inter-letter space, or by other graphical conventions. The concept of "word" is usually distinguished from that of a morpheme, which is the smallest unit of speech which has a