

# Divine Authority

## Lesson 1

### What Is Authority And Why Do We Need It?

## Introduction

- When teaching denominational friends, we often lovingly challenge them to search the Bible to see if what they are teaching and practicing is authorized
- Common response – specifics about what we believe and practice do not matter
- As long as we believe in Jesus and are sincere about our religious beliefs and practices, we are pleasing to God
- But, is this so?

2

## Introduction

- Others will admit they need to base beliefs and practices on Bible authority but they will turn to unreliable sources for authority such as human opinions, spoken and written traditions or following what the majority believes is right
- It is clear that a misunderstanding of Divine authority has produced numerous denominations

3

## Introduction

- Even among churches of Christ, we can observe a great difference in beliefs and practices
- Why do some churches of Christ send money from their treasuries to colleges or benevolent organizations and other churches do not
- Why do some churches expend funds and provide space for social activities and others do not?

4

## Introduction

- Reason for differences between churches of Christ - there is a difference in how we understand Divine authority and how we apply it to the work and organization of a local church
- For example, the Manhattan church of Christ in New York City provides funds and space for recreational and entertainment activities for its members

5

## Introduction

- We would disagree with these actions because we believe that the New Testament only authorizes individual Christians to do them, not local churches
- But, from the Manhattan church's Web site we can see that they also insist like we do that they believe the Bible to be their only authority
- However, the application of that authority is quite different from us

6

## Introduction

“We believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God and is our authority in all matters of faith and life.”

From Manhattan church of Christ Web site

7

## Introduction

- Do these differences between churches of Christ really matter?
- Yes, because they involve how the local church works, what we are authorized to do together
- Therefore, since they involve the whole local church, some can never endorse or financially support activities they believe are unauthorized by Scriptures

8

## Purposes of These Lessons

- Understand Divine authority and how it should apply to the organization and work of a local church
- Recognize unauthorized practices of the majority of churches of Christ
- Examine our own practices so we do not follow unfaithful churches of Christ or denominations in these errors

9

## As We Challenge Others, Let Us Challenge Ourselves

Act 17:11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.

1Th 5:21 But examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good;

10

## What Is Authority And Why Do We Need It?

What is authority?

Why do we need authority in all areas of life?

Why is it important for us to submit to Divine authority?

11

## What Is Authority?

“Exousia (Greek, *gih*) denotes authority (from the impersonal verb *exesti*, “It is lawful”). From the meaning of leave or permission, or liberty as doing as one pleases, it passed to that of the ability or strength with which one is endued, ...”

(An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, by W. E. Vine, p. 89.)

12

## What Is Authority?

“...then to that of the power of authority, the right to exercise power, e.g., Matt. 9:6; 21:23; 2 Cor. 10:8; or the power of rule or government, the power of one whose will and commands must be obeyed by others, e.g., Matt. 28:18; John 17:2; Jude 25; Rev. 12:10, 17:13; “

(An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, by W. E. Vine, p. 89.)

13

## What Is Authority?

From the previous definition, we gather that authority simply means, the power or right to command

14

## Why Do We Need Authority In All Areas of Life?

In all areas, we need authority to function smoothly and avoid chaos

Note the following examples and what they would be like without any authority

Home

Government

School

Workplace

15

## Why Do We Need Authority In All Areas of Life?

- Although many may recognize a need for authority in earthly matters, many fail to make the same judgment regarding religion
- In religion, many are content with following what they feel in their heart or what they have always done over the years

16

## Why Is It Important For Us To Submit To Divine Authority?

- From the beginning, God has always been displeased with those who reject His authority
- To reject His authority means we cannot be approved by Him now or in eternity
- The following examples contrast those who submit to Divine authority with those who reject His authority

17

## Cain And Abel

What God authorized

Heb 11:4 By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

Rom 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

18

## Cain And Abel

What Cain and Abel did

Gen 4:3 So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground.

Gen 4:4 Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering;

19

## Cain And Abel

What Cain and Abel did

Gen 4:5 but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

Gen 4:6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?"

20

## Cain And Abel

What Cain and Abel did

Gen 4:7 "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

Gen 4:8 Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

21

## Cain And Abel

What God did

Gen 4:11 "Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

Gen 4:12 "When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth."

22

## Nadab And Abihu

What God authorized

Lev 16:12 "He shall take a firepan full of coals of fire from upon the altar before the LORD and two handfuls of finely ground sweet incense, and bring it inside the veil.

23

## Nadab And Abihu

What Nadab and Abihu did

Lev 10:1 Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them.

24

## Nadab And Abihu

What God did

Lev 10:2 And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.

Lev 10:3 Then Moses said to Aaron, "It is what the LORD spoke, saying, 'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored.'" So Aaron, therefore, kept silent.

25

## King Uzziah

What God authorized

Exo 30:7 "Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it; he shall burn it every morning when he trims the lamps.

Exo 30:8 "When Aaron trims the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense. There shall be perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations.

26

## King Uzziah

What Uzziah did

2Ch 26:16 But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the LORD his God, for he entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense.

2Ch 26:17 Then Azariah the priest entered after him and with him eighty priests of the LORD, valiant men.

27

## King Uzziah

What Uzziah did

2Ch 26:18 They opposed Uzziah the king and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful and will have no honor from the LORD God."

28

## King Uzziah

What God did

2Ch 26:19 But Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged; and while he was enraged with the priests, the leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the altar of incense.

29

## King Uzziah

What God did

2Ch 26:20 Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he was leprous on his forehead; and they hurried him out of there, and he himself also hastened to get out because the LORD had smitten him.

30

## King Uzziah

What God did

2Ch 26:21 King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death; and he lived in a separate house, being a leper, for he was cut off from the house of the LORD. And Jotham his son was over the king's house judging the people of the land.

31

## Jesus' Statement

Practicing lawlessness or doing His will

Mat 7:21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.

Mat 7:22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

32

## Jesus' Statement

Practicing lawlessness or doing His will

Mat 7:23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

33

## The Baptism of John – A Lesson In Authority

- Although they had evil motives, they recognized need for authority in religion
- They recognized one must receive authority from one who had the right to command
- God alone has the right to command all in religion

34

## The Baptism of John – A Lesson In Authority

Mat 21:23 When He entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him while He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?"

35

## The Baptism of John – A Lesson In Authority

Jesus' answer reveals authority can originate from only two sources

Heaven

Men

Divine or human

36

## The Baptism of John – A Lesson In Authority

Mat 21:24 Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things.

Mat 21:25 "The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?" And they began reasoning among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Then why did you not believe him?'"

37

## The Baptism of John – A Lesson In Authority

Mat 21:26 "But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the people; for they all regard John as a prophet."

Mat 21:27 And answering Jesus, they said, "We do not know." He also said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

38

## The Apostles' Statement

2Th 2:15 So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.

39

## The Apostles' Statement

Gal 1:6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;

Gal 1:7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

Gal 1:8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

40

## The Apostles' Statement

2Jo 1:9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

2Jo 1:10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting;

41

## The Apostles' Statement

2Jo 1:11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

42

## What We Have Learned In This Lesson

Authority is the power or right to command

Without authority, life would be chaos

The only way we can please God is to willingly submit to His Divine authority

To rebel means eternal punishment

In both Old and New Testaments, we see the seriousness of disregarding Divine authority

## Divine Authority

### Lesson 1 - What is Authority and Why Do We Need It?

#### Various passages and material from Lesson 1 outline

For each of the following questions, please circle the letter by the correct answer.

1. Gen. 4, Heb. 11:4, Rom. 10:17. God rejected Cain's sacrifice and accepted Abel's because
  - A. God was prejudiced against Cain.
  - B. Cain did not offer his sacrifice by faith.
  - C. God did not clearly reveal to Cain what he should offer.
  - D. God acted in an arbitrary manner.
  
2. 2 Chron. 26:16-21, Ex. 30:7-8. It was wrong for King Uzziah to burn incense in the Temple because
  - A. He was neglecting his royal duties.
  - B. He was unfamiliar with how the process was conducted.
  - C. God had authorized only the priests to do this.
  - D. He might cause a fire in the Temple.
  
3. Mat. 7:21-23. From this passage, we learn that
  - A. All who call Jesus "Lord" will be saved.
  - B. None who call Jesus "Lord" will be saved.
  - C. All who do good works in Jesus' name will be saved.
  - D. Only those who do the will of Jesus' Father will be saved.

4. Mat. 21:23-27. Regarding the need for authority, it is clear from this passage that
  - A. The Jewish leaders did not recognize their need for authority.
  - B. Jesus did not recognize a need for authority.
  - C. Both Jesus and the Jewish leaders recognized a need for authority.
  - D. Neither Jesus nor the Jewish leaders recognized a need for authority.
  
5. Mat. 21:23-27. When the Jewish leaders refused to answer Jesus' question about whether John's baptism was from heaven or from men, this showed that they
  - A. Had a deep respect for Divine authority.
  - B. Did not believe John's baptism was divinely authorized..
  - C. Did not really know how to answer Him.
  - D. Secretly believed in John's baptism.
  
6. As we seek to know what we are authorized to do today, we use as our standard
  - A. Both the Old and New Testaments.
  - B. The New Testament.
  - C. The Old Testament.
  - D. Whatever we feel is best for us to do.
  
7. If we do not respect and submit to Divine authority,
  - A. It will cause us to be lost.
  - B. It makes no difference.

C. We have the freedom to act in whatever we please.

D. It is God's fault because He has been unclear about what we should do.

For each statement, circle True or False.

True     False     1.     All those who call themselves a church of Christ are acceptable to God.

True     False     2.     God punished Cain by executing him.

True     False     3.     God was displeased with Nadab and Abihu because they offered what He had not commanded.

True     False     4.     Uzziah's disobedience was caused by his covetousness.

True     False     5.     God punished Uzziah with blindness.

True     False     6.     If we do not submit to Divine authority, we cannot remain in fellowship with God.

For each question, please provide statements that clearly answer each question.

1. Please list some differences you have observed between this local church and others you might have worshipped with in the past.
2. What are some of the attitudes we should display as we search the Scriptures for truth and why are they important.
3. Please give some examples of how authority is important in all areas of life.
4. In your own words, describe authority.

5. Please summarize the points we should learn from the three Old Testament examples we have studied in this lesson.
  
6. Please summarize what we should learn regarding Jesus' exchange with the Jewish leaders in Mat. 21:23-27.
  
7. Please explain how we should approach the apostles' teaching as it relates to Divine authority.
  
8. Comparing the Old and New Testaments, has God changed His attitude concerning the necessity for us to obey Him today?