

(Cont. from pg. 3) which serve as binding examples to us today are the approved examples of behavior carried out under Christ and the apostles.

Finally, as a piece of written material, the Bible is filled with numerous topics and discussions of issues. The inferences within these discourses to things which have been commanded or described further clarify the application of what is authorized under Christ. As with any literature, inferences are often more subjective (i.e. subject to personal opinion and perspective) than direct statements or descriptions. One person might draw an inference from some nuance of wording which totally eludes another person. Or, there might be inferential references to things that are incidental to the matter under consideration. As a result, when we look to the inferences of Scripture we must look to those necessary inferences that clarify approved examples or direct commands. When such inferences offer inescapable conclusions about a

matter under consideration, they establish authority for action in service to God.

Many in the world conduct themselves as if there is no need to establish divine authority in religion. The question posed to Jesus remains particularly applicable to such people today, "by what authority are you doing these things?" Jesus and the apostles acted under divine authority. What about us?

By Kyle Pope



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# Faithful Sayings

## Olsen Park Church of Christ

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Sunday: 9:30 a.m.  
10:20 a.m.  
6:00 p.m.  
Wednesday: 7:00 p.m.

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### Deacons:

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## “By What Authority Are You Doing These Things?”

When Jesus finished the sermon on the mount Scripture tells us that the people were amazed - “for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” (Matthew 7:29, NKJV). Thayer in his *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* tells us that the word *exousia* (ἐξουσία), translated “authority” here, means - “...the power of rule or government (the power of him whose will and commands must be submitted to by others and obeyed)...” (p. 225). When Jesus taught He was giving commands that the people were to obey. This was different from the way the scribes and pharisees taught.

This demonstration of authority was not always well received. Matthew, Mark and

Luke all tell us of an occasion when the chief priests, scribes and elders asked Jesus - “...By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?” (Matthew 21:23, cf. Mark 11:28 & Luke 20:2). On this occasion, because of the hardness of their hearts in rejecting John the Baptist, Jesus did not answer their question directly. However, on other occasions, He directly addressed

this issue. John tells us in three passages how explicitly Jesus answered this matter. In John 7:16 Jesus said, “...My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.” In John 12:49 He said, “For I have not spoken on My own [authority]; but the Father who sent Me gave Me (Cont on pg. 2).



(Cont. from pg. 1) a command, what I should say and what I should speak.” And finally, in John 14:24 He said, “...the word which you hear is not Mine Father’s who sent Me.” Jesus, shows us with these words that He Himself, God the Son, was acting under the authority of God the Father.

After Jesus’ resurrection, the extent of Jesus’ authority was broadened. As He gives His apostles the charge to teach all the nations, He begins with the words, “...All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” (Matthew 28:18). This tells us that God the Father gave to Jesus the right to command all the universe. As a result all of the universe is obligated to obey Jesus’ teachings and submit themselves to His authority. This was promised in Deuteronomy 18:18-19, when God told Moses, “I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be [that] whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require [it] of him.”

When the apostles went out to preach they acknowledged Divine authority, and held themselves under such authority. In the first sermon which they preach, they teach the Jews on the day of Pentecost to, “...Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ...” (Acts 2:38). The apostle Paul taught the Christians in Colosse, “And [whatever] you do in word or deed, [do] all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” (Colossians 3:17). To act “in the name” of Jesus is to act with and under the au-

thority of Jesus. This meant that the apostles’ message, like that of Jesus, was not their own but from the One who sent them. Paul praised the church in Thessalonica saying, “...when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed [it] not [as] the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.” (I Thessalonians 2:13). The writings of the apostles held the same authority. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.” (I Corinthians 14:37).

Just as God had promised to give authority to Jesus, Jesus had promised to give authority to His apostles. Jesus encouraged His disciples saying, “...when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.” (Matthew 10:19-20). If people rejected the message of the apostles, Jesus taught that it was the same as rejecting Jesus, and rejecting God the Father. Luke tells us that Jesus told His apostles, “He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me.” (10:16). When we look to the Bible we have the written teachings of Jesus. Whether we look at the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ words while on the earth or the records of what the apostles taught, we have before us the teachings (or doctrine) of Jesus. This is the standard

of authority that must be obeyed. This is the source from which we must derive the authority for all that we say and do in service to God.

How can we establish from Scripture authority for what we do in service to God? First we must understand what the Bible is. Quite simply, it is the written will of God. It was given to the apostles and prophets of the first century in order to communicate understandable information to ordinary human beings. When Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he claimed that the things which he wrote explained the plan of God which had previously been a mystery. He told them, “...when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets” (Ephesians 3:4-5). When Paul tells them, “when you read, you may understand” it shows us that Scripture is not some dark enigma that can not be unraveled, but written communication that can be understood just as we do any other type of written communication.

When we read a letter, a story, an article or some type of instructional literature we use the same basic methods to discern the meaning of the material. We consider what the document states directly, what it describes and what it infers about the subject in question. All of this information is taken into account in order to ascertain the content of the piece. The Bible is no different. There are direct state-



ments that which explicitly command or direct some behavior. There are descriptions of behavior that is approved or condemned. There are, in the context of some broader discussion, details which are inferred which further clarify meaning.

If we are going to act under the authority of Jesus in what we do in service to God what will determine whether or not we have authority for the things we do? There are many direct statements that are in the Bible. Some to specific individuals and not to anyone else (e.g. Abraham’s charge to sacrifice Isaac - Genesis 22:2). Other commands fall under a distinct period of jurisdiction, and do not apply to those under Christ (e.g. Animal Sacrifice under the Law of Moses). If Jesus Christ now has all authority, and He gave His instructions to His apostles, it would follow that the first source we should look to in order to establish authority would be Jesus and the apostles direct commands.

Next, we look to the descriptions of things in the Bible. Again, if we are interested in acting under the authority of Christ our pattern can not be drawn from descriptions of behavior that was not subject to the authority of Christ (e.g. Israel under the Law of Moses or Gentiles without God). That brings us to what is described in the New Testament. Here we find descriptions of things that were approved and things that were not approved. If Jesus taught that rejection of the apostles was rejection of Him (Luke 10:16), it would follow that those descriptions (Cont. on pg. 4)