

Rom. 14:19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.



John 8:32 and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

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“THE PROPER SOURCE OF AUTHORITY”

by Heath Rogers

"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?'" (Matt. 21:23).

The chief priests and elders who confronted Jesus were asking legitimate questions. Jesus needed authority for the things He did in the temple, and this authority had to come from the proper source.

In last week's article, we considered some improper sources of authority that people use regarding their religious beliefs and practices: themselves, traditions, creeds of men, what the preacher says, the results accomplished, and the Old Testament. In this article, we will consider the proper source for authority in religious matters.

Notice our Lord's response to the questions asked by the chief priests and elders. *"But Jesus answered and 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: The baptism of John - where was it from? From heaven or from men?'"* (Matt. 21:24-25a).

According to Jesus, authority in religious matters can only come from one of two possible sources: from heaven (God) or from men. The reasoning of the chief priests and elders shows they properly understood that authority in religious matters must come from God and not from men.

God has all authority. He has the right to take action, give commands, and enforce obedience. This authority or power belongs to God by right of creation (Rom. 9:20-21).

God has given all authority to Jesus. *"And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth'"* (Matt. 28:18). If Jesus has all authority, that means we are to listen to Him, not to ourselves, creeds, or traditions. God spoke to His people in the Old Testament through the prophets, but He speaks to us today through His Son (Heb. 1:1-2).

Jesus gave the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth. *"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you"* (John 16:12-14). Read these verses again and notice the chain of authority. Jesus has been given all authority. The Holy Spirit would take the words of Jesus and declare them to the apostles. Therefore, the words of the apostles were the authoritative message of Jesus.

The apostles and other men inspired by the Holy Spirit wrote the New Testament. The New Testament is our source for authority in religion today. When we appeal to the New Testament Scriptures as authority for the things we believe, teach, and practice, we are not appealing to men but to heaven.

His Last Words

Jefferson David Tant

The date was March 3, 1997. As my wife Flora and I stood beside the bed of my father, he looked up and said, "I love you." What a great way to end life's journey on this earth. One might say those could be the most important and meaningful words that could ever be spoken.

My father, Fanning Yater Tant, came to live with us after he fell and had a broken bone while doing some yard work at the home of my mother and father in Gardendale, Alabama. He was not with us long before the final call came. He was 88 years old and had spent his life in sharing the gospel through his preaching and writing.

Dear Reader, can you think of any more important and helpful words than the words of love? What would you say is the most memorized verse in all the Bible? That would probably be **John 3:16**: *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."*

And what were some of the last words of Christ just moments before he died a cruel death on the cross? Were they not words of love? *"But Jesus was saying, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves."* (**Luke 23:34**)

So, why was Christ willing to come to the earth, lead a simple life and suffer indescribable pain in his death? Because He loved us. Note John's words in **Revelation 1:4**: *"John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood."*

Another familiar passage is **I Corinthians 13:13**: *"But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love."*

So, with these passages in mind, is there a message for us? I believe the apostle John expressed it well in **I John 4:11**: *"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."* While this passage may apply to Christians loving other Christians, the principle goes far

beyond that, as Christ set the example for us in showing love even for his enemies.

So, the question is, how do we show love for others—our next-door neighbors, the store clerk, the strangers we meet from time to time? If you saw your neighbor's house on fire, and believed some people were inside, would you make an effort to rescue them? You know you would. If you saw an elderly woman struggling to load heavy bags of groceries into her car, would you stop to help her. Same answer. Well, what about people who do not know Christ, and whose fate is destined to spend eternity in the fires of hell? Are you making any effort to rescue them?

We are familiar with the Great Commission that Christ gave his disciples before he left them to return to heaven. *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* (**Matthew 28:19-20**)

Note that there are two recipients to the Great Commission. (1) The disciples to whom Christ was speaking, and (2) those who the disciples taught were then commissioned to do the very same thing—go, teach and baptize. Thus, the Great Commission is given to you and me just as it was to those who were with Christ at that time.

And note Christ's answer to a question: *"One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, 'What commandment is the foremost of all?'"* Jesus answered, *"The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.'*" *The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'* *There is no other commandment greater than these."* *The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'* *There is no other commandment greater than these."* (**Mark 12:28-31**)

What greater gift could you give someone other than the Words of Eternal Life? Question: What are you doing to fulfill the second greatest command that God has given to you and me?

You may think you are not well versed in the Scriptures, or you may not feel competent to be a good teacher. But you can make a contact, and you can find someone to go with you when you find someone willing to sit down and have a study. Christ gave His life for the lost. What are we willing to do for the lost?

--jdtant3@juno.com

How is one born again?

John chapter three is the only text that uses the phrase "*born again*." It is, however, an idea described in many places in the New Testament.

If you want to be in the kingdom of God you must be born again (**John 3:3**). Nicodemus asked how - thinking only of a natural, physical birth. Jesus explained that one must be born of water and the Spirit (**v. 5**). Physical birth produces physical life. Spiritual life requires a spiritual birth (**v. 6**). The Spirit of God is the life-giving force in this birth.

Jesus said it is a birth of water and the Spirit. How is water involved? Of what spiritual use is water in all of Jesus' teaching? Baptism is the only possible answer. Note that baptism is for the forgiveness of sins (**Acts 2:38**). It saves (**1 Peter 3:21**), it washes away sins (**Acts 22:16**), and we rise from it to new life (**Romans 6:4**).

Salvation is the Spirit's work in baptism. It is the Spirit that has given the command and instructions for baptism. The power is not in the water but in the Spirit as we submit to Him in faith and baptism.

Don Bunting

A WARNING FROM SCRIPTURE

Jim Stauffer

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. (1 Timothy 4:1-3)

Paul warns Timothy of a day when something to be avoided will take place. Some will fall away from the faith (**Gal. 5:4**) by listening to deceitful spirits and doctrines of

demons (**1 John 4:1-6**). He says the source of this apostasy is hypocritical liars who have become desensitized to such error (**Eph. 4:19**) it is as if their conscience was seared with a hot iron destroying the nerves that would experience the pain of such.

What is interesting in this particular text is Paul does not list such vile things as stealing, drunkenness or fornication which almost everyone would oppose as the purpose and result of this apostasy. He says it is to forbid marriage and advocate abstinence from certain foods. Two things God has created which are to be shared in by those who believe and know the truth.

These then become for these false teachers (**see Matthew 7:15-20**) a doctrinal agenda that opposes what God intended His children to share. How diabolical! Can you hear Jesus say as He would observe such, '**BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.**' (**Matt. 15:9**)

If we are to serve the Lord faithfully, we must come to understand His demand for reverence for His word, His authority. *And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (Matthew 28:18)* How much authority do you think that leaves any man or any religious organization if Jesus has it all? God said about Jesus, *....when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:20-23)* How serious then do you believe it is when men and religious organizations devise doctrines contrary to what Jesus and His apostles by inspiration of the Holy Spirit set forth in Scripture?

Jesus condemned such things, *"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. "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?' "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'* (**Matthew 7:21-23**)

Operating outside the authority of God and Christ is lawlessness and that is sin (**1 John 3:4**).

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

HOURS OF WORSHIP

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study

Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

Visitors welcome

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We offer Correspondence Courses

OUR ADDRESS IS:

7845 Cottonwood Dr.

Lenexa, Kansas 66216

913-620-0563

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Bible Classes: Sunday Morning
Titus, Philemon - Jim Stauffer

Wednesday Evening: **Joshua, Judges, Ruth** - Bill Miller

Sunday Sermon: **The Doctrine of Christ**



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10