

Who Has Final Authority?

INTRODUCTION.

- A. In matters of religion, morality, family life, ethics, etc., who has final authority?
 - 1. Does some church or religious group possess final authority?
 - 2. Do your parents have final authority?
 - 3. Is some great religious leader the final authority?
- B. The fact that there are a large number of differing religious groups in this world suggests that man, in general, does not have a proper understanding of who possess final authority?
 - 1. As far as some churches or religious groups go, they range from one extreme to the other. Some will bind where the Bible does not bind and others will loose where the Bible does not loose.
 - 2. Individually speaking, there are plenty of people who live their lives as if no one possess final authority in their lives except for themselves.
- C. It is the purpose of this lesson to answer the question, “Who Has Final Authority?”
- D. Let us begin by showing that man is in need of someone greater than himself to possess the final authority.

I. MAN NEEDS AUTHORITY GREATER THAN HIMSELF.

- A. In a discussion with Jesus, the chief priests acknowledged the need for authority. (Matthew 21:23-27)
 - 1. The chief priests asked Jesus, “By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?” (NKJV)
 - a. They recognized the need for authority.
 - b. They recognized the need for someone with authority to grant authority.
 - 2. Jesus replied by asking them a question, “The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?” (NKJV)
 - a. In Jesus’s question, we see that authority can only come from one of two sources: from Heaven or from man.
 - b. From Heaven would be from a divine source, God.

- B. There are some who would deny that final authority is needed, especially in matters of religion.
 - 1. Quite often these people will look to themselves as authority. (Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 14:12)
 - 2. Other times, these people will look to other men. (Matthew 15:9)
- C. Sadly, this disregard for Bible authority has been seen within local churches of Christ.
 - 1. There are practices not authorized by scriptures.
 - 2. There are specific teachings which are ignored or rejected.
- D. The recognition of God's authority is necessary if we are going to have God's approval and fellowship. (II John 1:9-11)

II. WHO POSSESSES FINAL AUTHORITY?

- A. In a simple passage, Jesus established God's final authority. (Matthew 7:21-23)
 - 1. Those who do the will of God will enter into Heaven. (vs 21)
 - 2. To do something other than the will of God is to practice lawlessness. (vs 23)
- B. Jesus's word is also final authority. His words will judge the world.
 - 1. Jesus is God's spokesman. (Matthew 17:1-5; Hebrews 1:1-2)
 - 2. Jesus taught the word that came from God. (John 17:6-8)
 - 3. Jesus has been given all authority in Heaven and on earth. (Matthew 28:18)
This authority was given to Jesus by God. (I Corinthians 15:27)
 - 4. The wise man will hear the words of Jesus and will do those words. (Matthew 7:24-25)
 - 5. Jesus is the head of the body, which is the church. (Ephesians 1:22-23)
 - 6. The world will be judged by the words of Jesus. (John 5:26,27; 12:47-50)
- C. The final authority was delegated to the apostles so that the world could know the will of God.
 - 1. Jesus gave the apostles the authority to bind and loose. However, the apostles could only bind and loose what had already been bound and loosed within the will of God. (Matthew 16:19)
 - 2. When Jesus left this world, He sent the Holy Spirit to aid the apostles in their

recollection and knowledge of what was to be bound and loosed. (John 14:25-26; 16:12-15)

- D. The apostles and inspired men recorded the word of God in written form so that we might have a complete record of God's will for man.
 - 1. Romans 1:16-17 - The gospel is complete. It is the power of God unto salvation. It reveals the righteousness of God.
 - 2. II Timothy 3:16-17 - The Bible is complete because all scripture was given by the inspiration of God.
 - 3. II Peter 1:3 - We have been given all things that pertain to life and godliness.
 - 4. Galatians 1:11-12 - The gospel taught by Paul was complete. This complete gospel had come through the revelation of Jesus Christ.
 - 5. Jude 3 - The writer Jude wrote through inspiration that the gospel had once for all been delivered to the saints. This statement shows completeness.

III. THE FINAL AUTHORITY EXCLUDES ALL OTHER SOURCES OF AUTHORITY.

- A. The doctrine or practices of the Old Testament have been excluded as a source of authority.
 - 1. Many people fail to realize this simple fact.
 - 2. They fail to recognize that the Old Testament system was removed by Jesus's death. (Hebrews 10:1; Colossians 2:14-16)
- B. The words of religious leaders have been excluded as a source of authority.
 - 1. There are those within the religious world who view the "preacher's" word as final authority in religious matters.
 - 2. Preachers are charged with the responsibility to simply teach what has already been taught in the word of God. (II Timothy 4:1-2)
- C. The creeds of men have been excluded as a source of authority.
 - 1. Practically every denomination has its manual, discipline, prayer book or book of minutes which contains its doctrines and procedures for that particular church.
 - 2. We cannot please God by accepting the creeds of men.
 - a. Doing so makes our worship in vain. (Matthew 15:9)
 - b. Consider the example seen in Colossians 2:20-23.

- D. The desires of a congregation have been excluded as a source of authority.
 - 1. Some religious organizations take pride in the fact that they are democratic and that their policies are determined by a majority vote.
 - 2. The wishes of the congregation or the majority may not always be right.
 - a. The nation of Israel wanted a king to lead them, which was not in their best interest. (I Kings 8)
 - b. When king Saul disobeyed God, he claimed that he was simply doing what the people wanted. (I Samuel 15:15,24)
- E. The elders of a local church have been excluded as a source of authority.
 - 1. Elders are to tend the flock or the local congregation. (I Peter 5:1-4)
 - 2. Elders are to exercise oversight over the flock. (Acts 20:28)
 - 3. While elders are to lead the congregation (and in that since they have been delegated authority by the word), they have no legislative power in matters of faith.
- F. The results accomplished have been excluded as a source of authority.
 - 1. Some people assume that if a practice is a good work, or that if it accomplishes big results, then it must be authorized by its results. They assume the end justifies the means.
 - 2. In the case of Nadab and Abihu, the ends did not justify the means. They should have used the proper fire authorized by the law. (Leviticus 10:1,2)

CONCLUSION.

- A. As we have we seen, man needs an authority greater than himself and that authority is God and His word.
- B. Since the final authority is God, it behooves every person to abide by His authority.

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