

Is The Bible Authoritative?

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

Robert is a native of Tennessee, born in Bradford, Tennessee October 30, 1931. He was baptized into Christ in 1944 and began preaching in 1949. He is a graduate of Freed-Hardeman University, David Lipscomb University and George Peabody College for Teachers. He has done local work for over 47 years, over 20 of those years with the church in Ripley, Tennessee where he still labors. He has written 30 books, contributed chapters to well over 150 books and written some 25-30 tracts. He is staff writer for a number of religious publications. For 12 years (1974-1986) he wrote manuscripts and extended outlines for V.E. Howard and the International Gospel Hour. For 17 years he wrote for the Gospel Advocate. For more than 16 years he has been involved with a prison ministry. He does radio and television preaching and is an instructor with the Online Academy of Biblical Studies. He and his wife Irene have 2 children (Rebecca Davis and Tim). They have grandchildren (Ryan Philip Davis, Jonathan Taylor Davis, Jeff Andrew Taylor and Lori Beth Taylor). Robert's late parents were members of the church more than 50 years each and his father served as an elder for a number of years during the 50's and 60's.

INTRODUCTION

In Open Forums and Question and Answer periods, which I often conduct in different parts of the country, I am frequently asked, "What is the greatest problem we face today in the realm of religion?" Uniformly, I have answered, "A lack of respect for the authority of God's Word." Where there is no authority there will be chaos and anarchy—a revival of the corrupt conditions prevalent in the era of the Judges (Judges 17:6-21:25). In between these twin declarations are to be found some of the most atrocious crimes conveyed anywhere in the Bible. It was a time when every man did what was right in his own eyes and what was right in his eyes was woefully wrong in the eyes of Jehovah God.

Authority is not an IN word in today's society. This is true in the home, in schools, in work places, in morals and even in religion. Yet in every dispensation in which God has dealt with man authority has been an imperative ingredient. Authority inhered the Patriarchal Dispensation; it inhered the Mosaic Economy with Moses and Old Testament prophets; it inheres Christianity. We have long preached, and correctly so, that Christianity is the religion of Biblical authority. Jesus Christ is the heavenly founder of Christianity and there is no way He can be separated from the wise concept of authority. He wielded it while here; He spoke of it in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18 (ASV); He clothed His apostles with power or authority when the Holy Spirit came upon them in Acts 2. He so promised in Mark 9:1; Luke 24:51 and Acts 1:8. He fulfilled it marvelously and minutely in Acts 2.

Authority is the right to command. Implied is the obligation for subjects of that power to submit whether in the home, school, society, on the job or within religion.

AUTHORITY IN PATRIARCHY

In Genesis 1-2 Adam and Eve were subject to the authority of God's Word as He told them to multiply, replenish the earth, have dominion, keep the garden and respect the prohibition God placed around the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In Genesis 3 they failed to respect his prohibition and thus plunged the world into sin. Great was the punishment they reaped. They were separated from the tree of life and so are we. That is why we all die whether young, old or in between.

In Genesis 4 Abel respected the Word of God while Cain did not respect such. In Genesis 5 we have the portrait of the lovely Enoch who respected that Word and walked with God for three or more centuries. In Genesis 6 nearly the whole world disrespected the Word of God with only eight obedient subjects of God on the whole earth among the accountable. The flood came upon the world of the ungodly as Peter expressed it in 2 Peter 2:5. Noah and his family of seven were saved because they respected God's Word and abided by it (Genesis 6:22; 7:5).

From Genesis 12-50 we read of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. These saintly patriarchs had deep respect for the Word of God and built their lives upon the same. God rewarded them richly.

AUTHORITY UNDER MOSES AND THE PROPHETS

Moses and Aaron were both subject to the authority of God's Word. This is why they went into Egypt and demanded the release of an entire nation of Israelites. Pharaoh was stubborn but the Almighty obtained his attention and all the nation of the Egyptians with the ten plagues. They learned the hard way that adamant sinners do not turn up their noses spiting or mocking God. Paul will address that in Galatians 6:7,8. From Sinai Moses received The Ten Commandments. Authority inhered each one; they were not mere suggestions or optional matters. God placed teeth in every one of them as the violation each one called for capital punishment. We are told that Moses and later prophets added another 603 making the grand total of 613 laws of the Mosaic System.

Old Testament prophets were God's spokesmen. They spoke with authority. Wayward priests and kings feared when God's prophets came with reprimands, as was often the case in the Old Testament. Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible, is filled with the authority of God's Word. Isaiah charged his generation to go to the law and the testimony in Isaiah 8:20. This he would not have done had these sacred writings been void of authority. In Isaiah 34:16 he counseled his peers to seek out the book of the Lord and read. This he would not have done if God's Book had been impotent in power or robbed of all authority. Note that he did not counsel them to go to the doctrines and commandments of men. The weeping prophet of Judah and Jerusalem, Jeremiah, told his adamant peers to hear the Word of the Lord in Jeremiah 22:29. Why charge such if God's Word had no power or authority inhering it? There were sixteen of the major and minor Prophets; they wrote seventeen prophetic books from Isaiah to Malachi. Jeremiah penned two, the rest penning one each. Minus exception each one preached that authority inhered the Word of Almighty God. They believed such from the depths of their saintly souls.

THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST

Being one of the Godhead Three means that he possessed authority or power just as the First and Third Persons possess such. That authority rested or resided in His Word. It is evidenced in the unfolding drama of creation. In his precious Prologue John, the apostle, affirmed that He was in the beginning with God and was God (John 1:1). Verses 2,3 state, "The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." In Colossians 1:15-17 Paul voices more of the same. So does Hebrews 1:10. "And God said" in Genesis 1 means that the Second Person was bringing all things into existence by the authority or power of His spoken Word. It is nothing short of slander against the Scriptures and blasphemy of His hold Word to contend that such Word is just informational and nothing more. I

would be ashamed to say such a thing or support one who contends for this type of slander. Israel's Sweet Singer adds these words of wisdom and weight,

By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth...For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Psalm 33:6,9).

The authority or power of Christ's Word is observed clearly and cogently in His preservation of the Universe. A duet of declarations tells us in Hebrews 1:3 and Colossians 1:17 respectively,

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;...And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

By Him all things are held together or held intact. Every now and then the "God is dead" theory rises among infidels as it did with Altizer during the 1960's when he claimed to preach God's funeral. Had the Godhead really died there would have been no one at the controls of the Universe and everything would have been in instant anarchy and total chaos. The inimitable Marshall Keeble said in response to this, "I had not heard the Lord had been sick, let alone had died!" Neither had occurred, as Keeble well knew. The Lord every lives and continues to uphold all things by the Word of His power or authority. And this Word power is far more than informational! Shame, SHAME on anyone who would reduce the Word of Christ to such a low level.

The power and authority of His Word is observed in the matchless and marvelous miracles He performed with such amazing ease. He healed the sick and infirm by the spoken Word of power and authority. In Mark 5, Luke 7 and John 11 He spoke words of brevity and the dead lived again. "Talitha cumi" or "Damsel, I say unto thee, arise..Young man, I say unto thee, Arise... Lazarus, come forth." The elements were subject to His Word of power or authority. He walked on the Galilean Sea, stopped a storm on that same sea, multiplied food for men, women and children en masse, told men when and where to catch fish and cursed a barren fig tree on Monday of the Final Week. What He did by the Word of His power and authority as far more than informational.

Authority pervaded all His teaching, preaching, parables and one-on-one conversations. Matthew's assessment of the Sermon on the Mount is given in these Words of weight and wisdom,

And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes (Matthew 7:28,29).

In Luke 4:32 astute observers "were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power." The Greek word for power here can also be translated as authority. They did not consider what he said as "a dead letter" as some preachers do in the notorious name of Calvinism. In John 7 officers are sent to apprehend Him. Returning without Him they told their superiors in John 7:46, "Never man spake like this man."

Authority or power pervades the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:46,47; John 20:21-23 and Acts 1:8. Opening syllables in Matthew's account of this marching

commission affirm that all power or authority had been tendered to Him in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18).

AUTHORITY IN CHRISTIANITY

Moses and Elijah appeared with the Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew 17; Mark 9 and Luke 9. Impetuous Peter proposed the building of three tabernacles—one for Moses, one for Elijah and one for Christ. Such a proposal raised Moses and Elijah too high and lowered Christ too much. From the majestic cloud Jehovah God said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matthew 17:5). Moses has had his day of power and authority as lawgiver; Elijah has had his day of power and authority as prophet; now hear my Son. Hebrews 1:1 informs us that God now speaks to us by His Son—not by Moses, Elijah and Christ—but by Christ.

Relative to His church He is builder, foundation, purchaser, head and saviour (Matthew 16:18; I Corinthians 3:11; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:23). Power or authority pervades all of these roles toward His church. As head He calls the shots (Ephesians 1:22,23; Colossians 1:18)—not Popes, priests, rabbis, preachers, cultic heads or Change Agents among us. Authority or power reigns in Him. He is the one and only lawgiver as per James 4:12. He delegated authority or power to the apostles as we see in Acts 1:8. Matthew 16:19 and 18:18 make it crystal clear that what they taught would already have been decided upon in the courts of heavenly glory. What they bound or loosed would already have been bound or loosed in heaven. They echoed authoritatively on earth that which had already been authoritatively decided in heaven by Deity. Proof of their apostolic authority is enunciated clearly and cogently by Jesus in these words, “He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me” (Luke 10:16). Hence, what we have from their voices and pens is just as authoritative as any of the red lettered sayings found in some New Testaments. All we do is to be done in His name or by His authority as per Colossians 3:17.

One of the very best concepts we have of authority and its levels of command is found in the statements made by the Capernaum centurion,

Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it (Luke 7:7,8).

The truth, when known and obeyed, will make us free (John 8:32). We have it and it is authoritative, infallible and all-sufficient. All truth has been revealed to us by apostolic men (John 16:13). We have it and it is authoritative, infallible and all-sufficient. We have been given all things that pertain to life and godliness as per II Peter 1:3. We have such and it is authoritative, infallible and all-sufficient. We have everything that is profitable, which will fit us and then outfit us within Sacred Scripture as per II Timothy 3:16,17. We have such in our precious possession and it is authoritative, infallible and all-sufficient. What need we more? Nothing is the definitive answer.

THOSE WHO REJECT BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

Numbered and noted they are:

1. Every creed-maker and user.
2. The entire Catholic, Protestant, cultic and occultic world.
3. The Change Agents among us.
4. The apathetic among us.
5. Those who place feelings over His Word.
6. Those who reduce the Word of God to just an informational medium.
7. Those who employ the language of Ashdod and talk of the supra-literary work of the Holy Spirit. Such language does not belong among people wedded to speaking as the oracles of God direct in I Peter 4:11.
8. Those who contend for the direct operation of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of both sinners and saints.
9. Those who reject the former but accept the latter. It is nothing short of delayed Calvinism. Either view is a serious impeachment of the all-sufficiency of God's Word. If not, why not?

CONCLUSION

Most assuredly, the Bible is authoritative. We must respect what it says; we must respect its silence.