

Sunday, September 15, 2024 am

COMMUNICATING WITH GOD (32)

Bible Study (4)

Our Need for Authority

We are continuing our examination of Bible study – ensuring that we “rightly divide” God’s word of truth. Thus far, we have made the brief case for why we should see the Bible as from God, some reasons why we should study the Bible and in our last lesson we addressed the power of God’s word.

Today we want to begin a sub-section about the importance of authority. This is an abbreviated study of this subject. In this study we want to address: What authority is and why it is important; How to establish authority – noting the 3 legitimate ways to do so as well as the difference between generic and specific authority; & the subject of silence as it relates to establishing authority for what we do. Today, we begin by asking: What is authority and why is it important?

I. What is authority?

- a. In our English language, the word has many different definitions including: 1) the power to determine, adjudicate, or otherwise settle issues or disputes; jurisdiction; the right to control, command, or determine. 2) A power or right delegated or given. 3) A person or body of persons in whom authority is vested. 4) Usually authorities, persons having the legal power to make and enforce the law.¹ NOTE in these definitions the emphasis on power (the right one has) and permission to do something.
- b. We see the need for authority all around us: 1) To drive a vehicle; 2) to enter a certain area – a theater, courthouse, a foreign country, restricted areas, etc. (sometimes, there are requirements to be granted access – e.g., admission to an amusement park or theater, times, etc.; 3) often jobs come with authority; 4) police officers have authority to enforce the laws in their area, etc.
- c. It has been said that for someone to act with authority, 3 things are necessary: 1) Someone with power to grant permission; 2) The permission is granted, and 3) A standard is in place (placing limitations upon that authority (consider the above examples).
- d. Biblically – authority means the same thing. It is about WHAT we have permission to do, including limitations placed upon HOW we act. CONSIDER the 3 things found in Genesis 2 & 3 concerning Adam & Even in the garden.
 - i. God had power to make and enact rules. He granted access to the garden of Eden.
 - ii. Adam and Eve were permitted to eat from almost every tree in the garden.
 - iii. A standard was put in place – they were told what they could and could NOT eat (the tree of knowledge of good and evil).

II. Why is authority important?

- a. In general, we need authority because:
 - i. Without it there will be chaos – when there is no standard of authority (or it is not enforced), men do whatever they want. This leads to chaos. Even the most hardened atheist must admit this. Judges 21:25 & 17:6 notes that in Israel there was no king and

¹ Dictionary.com. (n.d.). *Authority definition & meaning*. Dictionary.com. <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/authority>. September 12, 2024

everyone did what was right in his own eyes. NOTE: This was NOT because they had no standard, but rather they ignored and failed to enforce it, en masse.

- ii. Without authority there will be evil – do we need a standard of right and wrong? Anyone who is honest will say yes (though they might debate what that standard is). This is about rules that EVERYONE needs to follow. Cf. 1 Timothy 1:8-9 – laws were made for the lawless.... Why are we constantly making new law? Because EVIL men are looking for ways to subvert laws of morality and right. NOTE: God’s laws make sense and WOULD make our world better, if they universally respected.
 - iii. To get things done – what happens when no one is in charge of a given situation? Usually, nothing gets done or things begin to fall apart. The Bible is filled with examples of leaders taking charge – Nehemiah, Ezra, Joshua, Jesus, the apostles, etc. NOTE: In each of these you can see the 3 elements necessary for authority.
 - iv. To establish order – This is why authority prevents chaos. Consider Genesis 1:1-2 – The world was “without form and void” (chaotic). “Then God said...”
- b. Spiritually, we need authority because:
- i. The nature of created man calls for it – we cannot deny that as humans we think about morality and spirituality. Even those who reject God and the Bible know that these are real concerns, whether they deal with them or not (if there is no God, why do atheists and humanists care about what believers teach and do?). WHAT is it about man that prompts him to think about God? Ecclesiastes 3:11 notes, *He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.* SINCE there is a God, clearly we need a standard and He needs to provide that standard. Romans 1:20 describes this world as being created with plenty of evidence. Psalm 104:24, *O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions—*
 - ii. There are consequences if we fail to follow God – knowing there is a God, does it matter what we do about our relationship with Him? If He has expectations (and He does) the answer is obvious. Note Matthew 7:21-23, 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9.
 - iii. If we have no spiritual standard man will create his own – history is replete with man creating God in his own image (cf. Romans 1:21-23, Acts 17:22-23). Why were men making up their own deities (some farfetched – Egyptian, Greek & Roman mythology)? They did not have God’s standard in front of them.
 - 1. Judges 21:25, everyone did what was right in his own eyes. The history of Israel records how they continually followed their own desires and the ways of the idolatrous nations around them. Some even created their own gods (e.g., Jeroboam – 1 Kings 12:25-33. This would become the downfall of Israel as virtually every king of Israel kept following those golden calves. NOTE: Their rejection of God was NOT because they did not have a standard of authority, but they CHOSE to reject it and follow their own pattern.
 - 2. As we look around, we can clearly see religious division. Why is it there? Much of it has to do with authority – is there a standard, what is that standard and HOW do we establish authority? If we cannot agree about authority, division is inevitable.
 - 3. Consider 1 Corinthians 1:10 – Paul’s admonition – that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you.

4. Typically, we are not divided over what God's word says, but what it does NOT say. 2 Peter 3:16 spoke of the untaught and unstable twisting scripture (specifically Paul's letters) to their own destruction.
- iv. In summary, **we NEED a standard and we need to agree on what that standard is and HOW we establish that standard.** That is why we must not only accept that the Bible IS the word of God, but also determine rules (boundaries) that will ensure we are "rightly dividing the word of truth".
- v. What should our standard of authority look like?
 1. It should grant us fellowship with God – 1 John 1:3, 6-7.
 2. It should promote the unity that God demands – John 17:20-21, Philippians 3:16, 2:1-2, etc.
 3. It should lead us to heaven – Matthew 7:21-23, 1 John 5:13, 1 Cor. 15:1-2.

III. Why should we listen to God?

- a. Colossians 3:17 says clearly that all we do must be "in the name of the Lord" which means by His authority. What act based upon the permission He has given us.
- b. Because He is God – Isaiah 45:3, *I am the Lord, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me...*; Psalm 90:2, *Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.* He is all-powerful, all-seeing, all-knowing, and eternal.
- c. Because He is sovereign – which means He has ultimate authority. He has the right and POWER to rule, govern, command and expect obedience to Him (submission). Psalm 115:3, *But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.*
- d. Because He created this world and set it in order – Genesis 1:1, Hebrews 3:4, *For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God.* Heb. 11:3, *By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.*
- e. Because He knows what is best for us – Jeremiah 10:23 – it is not in man to direct His own steps. He has the right to tell us what to do and how to do it. MUCH of our worldly chaos and brokenness is the result of ignoring God's authority and standard.
- f. Because He demonstrates His control – I refer you to our recent lesson in which we addressed how God's word shows He is in control, especially through prophecy. Galatians 4:4 - *But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,...* Jesus came at the intended time He established. And the numerous prophecies about Jesus show this control. NO OTHER world religion's god make the types of verified claims we find in the Bible.
- g. Because of the work of Jesus and Holy Spirit. Both are part of the Godhead (triune God). They are equally God and have done work that factors into authority.
 - i. John 1:1, 14 – Jesus is God. Matthew 28:18 – Jesus declared that He has all authority. Acts 2:36 – Peter concluded his sermon declaring, *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."*
 - ii. Hebrews 9:14 – Holy Spirit is described as "the eternal Spirit". The Bible is the product of His work – John 14:26, 16:13 – He would guide the apostles; 2 Peter 1:20-21, 1 Corinthians 2:9-11 – we know God and His will because He revealed it to us.

Much more could be said about these things, but my point in this study is to emphasize that we need authority for what we do. The Bible is God's message to us and as such, it must be our source of authority. Therefore, we need to study it in such a way that we ensure we are handling it accurately. For that is the ONLY way we can ensure that what we are doing is pleasing to Him. And it is with that in mind that we are presenting this study. What about you? How much time do you spend listening to Him?