**Identifying the One Church (2) – Authority**

**Introduction**

1. The necessity of appealing to, and submitting to authority is seen in most aspects of life. (Home, school, work, military, etc.)
2. The same is especially true with the church, and all her beliefs and practices. (**cf. 1 Timothy 3:15** – Paul writes to give instruction to proper conduct, as opposed to improper conduct.)
3. The Pharisees exhibited an inconsistency in their appeal to authority (**cf. Matthew 21:23-27**).
   1. **(v. 23)** – Acknowledged need for authority. (Were not asking with honest motives, but their question shows the importance of authority.)
   2. **(vv. 24-27)** – Jesus exposed their inconsistency, thus, their hypocrisy. They rejected the authority of God in John’s baptism, and in Jesus’ teaching. (*NOTE: Why did the multitude count John as a prophet? Because he was. He had authority from God, and the chief priests and elders rejected him, as they do Jesus.*)
4. Lesson one showed the establishment of the one church in the NT. What authority did that church appeal to, and submit to?
5. Authority of the New Testament Church
6. Christ
   1. **Matthew 28:18** – Before His ascension into heaven, when He commissioned the disciples to make disciples.
      1. **Ephesians 1:22-23** – He is the head of the church, His body.
      2. **The head is a figure of authority**.
   2. **Acts 2:32, 33a, 34-36** – God raised up Jesus, exalted Him to His right hand, gave Him authority over enemies, made Him Lord and Christ. (***On throne, King 🡪)***
   3. ***“He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords” (1 Timothy 6:15).***
      1. **How can people not grasp the concept that Jesus must be obeyed when this description is given?**
      2. **Colossians 3:17** – As with one sent by a king – *“in the name of the king I command you…”*
   4. **Kings make laws, and enforce laws:**
      1. ***“There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy” (James 4:12)***.
      2. **1 Corinthians 9:21** (*Paul becoming all things to all men to win them over, but not rebelling against Christ’s law – authority*.)
7. **Christ’s Gospel (The King’s decree…)**
   1. **Hebrews 1:1-2a** – God communicates His will (which must be obeyed) through His Son, Jesus. (*How does this occur? How is Jesus speaking to us?*)
   2. **Hebrews 2:1-4** (*Context: Jewish Christians turning away from Jesus by rejecting His word, and turning back to Judaism.*) – ***“spoken by the Lord”***
      1. Those who heard Him, confirmed, and God bore witness? 🡪
      2. **Matthew 28:18, 19a, 20** – Make disciples by Christ’s authority. Teach them to do what Christ says – **Christ is with them**.
      3. **Mark 16:19-20** – Christ at right hand of God (authority, King), but *worked with them by bearing witness to their word (HIS WORD) with miracles.*
      4. ***“The things I write to you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 14:37).***
      5. **Galatians 1:8-9** – Anything that differs from the gospel is to be rejected, no matter the source!
      6. **2 Corinthians 11:3-4** – Paul feared that they might put up with something different because of the destruction it brings – ***“let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8).***
      7. ***“O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps” (Jeremiah 10:23).***
      8. ***“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12).***
      9. *Stray from this word?* 🡪 ***“neglect so great a salvation”*** 🡪
   3. **Romans 1:16** – We are powerless to save ourselves – God has the power to save us – He has **designed His gospel (word) to exert that force** to the end of our salvation.
      1. Disciples in the first century did not adhere closely to the word of Christ because they thought by doing so they could earn their salvation.
      2. **They obeyed the word because that is how God determined to save men by His power!**
   4. ***“how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation”*** – **cf. Hebrews 10:28-29** – Those who neglect the word (fail to submit to, and apply) reject Christ, and the salvation He offers – **They will be punished.** 🡪
   5. Jesus will come ***“in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:8).***
8. The authority of the ONE church of the New Testament was solely Christ. Such authority was communicated and enforced by His gospel. They were careful to obey His ENTIRE word because negligence to do so led to eternal punishment – THE SAME IS TRUE FOR THAT SAME CHURCH THAT EXISTS TODAY. (**Any church which does not answer to the same authority is not that ONE church.**)
9. Human Creeds – A Contradiction to Their Claim
10. A Contradictory Appeal to Scripture (*quotes from Baptist Manual illustrate denominational rhetoric*)
    1. “All who believe the Scriptures to be divinely inspired consider them the fountain of religious truth. The Bible contains the revelation of God to man. It is the supreme standard of faith and practice. Whatever conforms to this standard is right – whatever deviates from it is wrong.” (Pendleton, J.M., *Baptist Church Manual*, pg. 41)
       1. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** – Scripture is inspired, and sufficient.
       2. ***“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11).***
       3. ***“Hold fast the pattern of sound words” (2 Timothy 1:13).***
    2. “But for human imperfection there would doubtless be uniformity of belief as to what the Scriptures teach. There is not uniformity, but a deplorable variety of religious opinion throughout Christendom…**Owing to this unfortunate fact**, though belief of the Bible is significant as between the religionist and the infidel, **it signifies nothing as between those who receive the Scriptures as the word of God**…As there is such a diversity of opinion in the religious world, it is eminently proper for those who appeal to the Scriptures as the fountain of truth to declare what they believe the Scriptures to teach.” (*Ibid*. pg. 41, 42)
       1. **Essentially, he is saying division is inevitable, thus, is inconsequential as long as one believes the Bible is the word of God.**
       2. **This is not so if you believe in what the Bible says:**
          1. *Division is sinful* – **1 Corinthians 1:10-13; Philippians 3:16**
          2. *Human Creeds are divisive.*
             1. “And though it has sometimes been said that creeds have produced differences of religious opinion, it would be nearer to the truth, logically and historically, to say that differences of religious opinion have produced creeds.” (Ibid. Pg. 42, 43).
             2. **However, once the creed has been produced, it goes on to produce further division.**
             3. Either way, the Bible clearly indicates division is sinful. 🡪
          3. *Human Creeds are sinful.*
11. Hypocritical Faith
    1. *Baptist Manual on the need for distinctive declarations, or creeds* – “To say that they believe the Scriptures [‘as the fountain of truth’] is to say nothing to the purpose. All will say this, and yet all differ as to the teachings of the Bible.” (*Ibid*. pg. 42)
    2. **Actually, to declare belief in the Scriptures “as the fountain of truth,” only to develop a creed of your own, contradicts such a declaration:**
       1. Any creed which differs from the Bible is wrong. (**cf. Galatians 1:8)**
          1. Any creed which adds to the Bible is wrong. (**cf. Revelation 22:19).**
          2. Any creed which takes away from the Bible is wrong. (Ibid.)
       2. Any creed which is precisely the same as the Bible is useless, because we have the Bible.
          1. No such creed written by man exists.
          2. **That is why the creeds exist, for people want to believe in something different than the Bible.** (**cf. Matthew 15:1-9** – Pharisees followed a human creed – traditions of elders.)
             1. **(vv. 3-6)** – What is the belief of the elders concerning the command of God to honor parents?

Say the profit is a gift to God.

Then you do not need to honor parent.

**(v. 6)** – Made commandment of no effect.

* + - * 1. **(vv. 7-9)** – **This is what a man’s creed does** – teaches as doctrines the commandments of men. (disregards scripture)
        2. ***“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46)***
        3. ***Jesus is saying, simply believe the Bible to be the fountain of truth, and obey it.***

1. **If the Bible is sufficient, then there is not a need for a creed book other than the Bible itself. *So, what is the real purpose of creed books written by men? 🡪***
2. Churches – Products of Their System of Faith
3. The Seed Principle
   1. The product of the seed resembles the nature of the seed – **cf. Galatians 6:7-8** (*flesh – corruption; spirit – everlasting life*); **2 Corinthians 9:6** (*sow sparingly – reap sparingly; sow bountifully – reap bountifully*).
   2. Word of God described as seed – ***“The seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11*** – parable of Sower explained).
   3. Word of God = word of Christ – ***“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Colossians 3:16).***
   4. ***“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations…teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded” (Matthew 28:19, 20).***
      1. **Disciple** – follower of one’s teaching.
      2. **Make disciples** – by teaching word of Christ.
   5. ***“And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11:26).***
      1. Christian – of Christ – of Christ’s teaching – disciple of Christ.
      2. Church – group of Christians – ***“churches of Christ” (Romans 16:16).***
      3. **Simply put, the church belongs to Christ because it follows the “word of Christ.”**
   6. **What about the different denominations?:**
      1. Bible + Creed book = member of denomination.
      2. Bible + Baptist Manual = Baptist
      3. Bible + Methodist Discipline = Methodist
      4. **A Creed book is merely a filter through which to put the Bible in an effort to get a different product than what the Bible alone produces.**
      5. *Baptists assembled = Baptist Church; etc.*
      6. *Christians assembled = church of Christ*
4. The Certified Seed
   1. **1 Peter 1:22-25** – Those who had their souls purified in the first century were those who simply obeyed the truth – the word of God – alone.
   2. **Colossians 3:17** – Those in the first century simply answered to the authority of Christ, which is found in His word.

**Conclusion – (1)** The Bible is very clear about the fact of only ONE AUTHORITY, and WHO/WHAT THAT AUTHORITY IS. **(2) Any church which answers to a different (less, more, or wholly different) authority than the word of Christ is not the ONE church of the New Testament that we read about.**