

## Understanding Biblical Authority (*part 1*)

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For me to come and share or teach on a topic, the preparation of a message is always a time of soul searching and self evaluation. It's really important to me to be real and relevant and personally trying to apply the things I'm teaching on.

Authority is one of those concepts that has been **badly distorted** over time, either by those who have abused it or by people just not having a proper understanding of how authority is supposed to work. Even though most of us have been exposed to an abuse of authority, that does not negate it's need or the biblical importance and relevance for us today.

There are authority structures in all aspects of life; in our career's, our education system, politics, law and order, family and the church. **And often our bad experiences or warped view of authority** makes it more difficult for us to embrace it's value and comply with some authority structure in our lives.

There are a few different greek words for authority but the primary one used in the New Testament is:

**Exousia: Power to act, authority, weight, especially: moral authority, influence, power of choice, liberty of doing as one pleases. Physical and mental power; the ability or strength with which one is endued, which he either possesses or exercises. A right or liberty.**

With a few variations this word is used 102 times in the New Testament: This word is used for the governing human authority's (like the Roman Empire), the Jewish leaders responsible to lead the people of God, and attributed to Jesus and his ability to do as the Father guided Him.

As the gospels point out Jesus often had contentious exchanges with the scribes, pharisee's and teachers of the law. **Jesus was not raised-up in the theological pharisee camp** so therefore did not have their approval over His ministry. So when He began to teach and disciple people **"with authority"** it caused them to become jealous and challenge Him. Matthew 21, Mark 11, and Luke 20 record this confrontation with the chief priests, scribes & elders:

**Matt 21: 23-27** (Context: This is the day after Jesus clears the temple) When Jesus returned to the temple courts and began to teach, the chief priests and elders of the people came up to Him. **"By what authority are You doing these things?"** they asked. **"And who gave You this authority?"**

**"I will also ask you one question,"** Jesus replied, **"and if you answer Me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. What was the source of John's baptism? Was it from heaven or from men?"** They deliberated among themselves and said, **"If we say, 'From heaven,' He will ask, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From men,' we are afraid of the crowd, for they all regard John as a prophet."** So they answered, **"We do not know."** And Jesus replied, **"Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."**

**Jesus calls their bluff;** they were in no position to judge where Jesus got His authority because they could not even judge where John got his.....even though the people regarded John a prophet.

Looking back a couple chapters we see that they had confronted Jesus authority once before. Matthew 16, Mark 8 & Luke 12 record this moment:

**Matt 16: 1- 4** (Context: This is right after He feeds the 4000) Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came and tested Jesus by asking Him to show them a sign from heaven. But He replied, “When evening comes, you say, ‘The weather will be fair, for the sky is red,’ and in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but not the signs of the times! A wicked and adulterous generation demands a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.” Then He left them and went away. (Red at night - Sailers delight, red in morning - sailers take warning). A similar exchange happened in Matt 12.

To understand this confrontation you need to understand the **ministry of Moses** and his commission to go to Egypt and demand the freedom of the people of Israel. Before he confronted Pharaoh he had to **demonstrate to the leaders of enslaved Israel** that God had sent him. Exodus 4:1-9 records God empowering Moses with some “signs” and in verses 29-31 Moses performs the signs before the leaders of enslaved Israel so they will believe. **This is the challenge the leaders of the Jews are confronting Jesus with.**

Moses himself said in **Deut 18:51** The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him. (In **Acts 3:23** Peter quotes this same verse confirming the prophecy of Moses was being fulfilled in their day through Jesus.)

Then we see in Matthew 28 after Jesus resurrection: All authority in heaven and on earth has been **given** to me.....go therefore and make disciples of all nations.

But Jesus already had some authority given to him prior to His death, burial & resurrection.

**Mark 1:21-28** Jesus taught with authority & the demons recognize Him.

**Mark 2:1-12** Through the roof; Jesus forgives sins, pharisee's protest. Authority to forgive.

**Mark 5:1-13** Demon possessed man recognize Jesus; beg for mercy, ask permission to be sent into the pigs.

**Mark 2:27** Jesus heals on the sabbath and declares He is Lord even of the sabbath.

**Mark 4:35-41** Jesus calms the storm. Authority over the weather.

**Matthew 23:2** Jesus even said: he Scribes and the Pharisee's sit in the seat of Moses (the place of authority). Do as they say...but don't do as they do.

So if Jesus has all authority, how much does the devil have? **None!** But the devil does have some power. **The enemy's greatest power is the power of deception and manipulation.** If he can get humans to think like he thinks, he can get people to DO the awful things that we often times see happening in the world today.

**How is authority received?** Can it be achieved? Fought for? Striven for? Prayed into being? Practiced until acquired? Stolen from another? Hostile take-over? Position yourself into it?

**None of these; it is given!** As we already read, even Jesus was given His authority. **Matt 28 Authority achieved by conquest will always have to be defended by contest.** We don't achieve authority; we receive it. **Turtle on a fence post.**

**Matthew 21:23-24** (we just read) the pharisees ask: **Who gave you this authority?** They knew authority was a “given” thing.

**John 5:27** (*corrected*) The Father **gave** Jesus authority because He is the **son of man** (not because He was the son of God)...interesting.

**Luke 4:6** Satan himself was given authority (until Jesus triumphed and took it from him) and had the power to **give** it to anyone he chose. Who gave Satan his authority? Through Adam & Eve...we did. Humanity. We had it, we gave it to Satan...But Jesus took it back **as a man**.

**Authority is all through the new testament.**

**Luke 7:8** The Centurion had authority and was under authority. He understood how authority works. There was no stumbling for him...unlike many of us.

**Acts 9:14** Saul was given authority to persecute believers. After the murder of Stephen Saul was **given** authority to arrest and persecute believers.

**Mark 3:14-15** Jesus appoints the 12 Apostles and sends them out to preach and **gave them authority** to cast our demons. (also in Matthew & Luke).

**So if authority is given; who is the giver?** The one(s) in authority over us....whether earthly or spiritual. Those in authority over us (whom we are in subjection to) can give us authority as they choose to give. Not demanded or achieved.

Here's an interesting revelation I had while pondering this: **The USA is a “Constitutional Republic”** and in this system there are people in places of authority (Political Representatives). **Who gave them the authority they have? The voters!** So if the voting masses gave them this authority; who really has authority? **Be an educated voter!!!**

**So what is the purpose of those with authority?**

**2 Corinthians 10:8 & 13:10** Paul (who used to be Saul) is dialoging with the Corinthian church stating that the **authority he was given** was for “building them up” rather than tearing them down.

**This is an important aspect of anyone in a position of spiritual authority; It should always be for the building-up of the saints.**

**Matt 20:25-28** Authority is given to serve. Even Jesus in His Lordship was to serve and give His life as a ransom for many.

**Ephesians 4:11-13** 5 Fold ministry model.

**1 Corinthians 12:28-29** First Apostles, then Prophets.....

to be continued