

# THE NEED FOR DIVINE AUTHORITY ESTABLISHED

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. All men recognize a need for authority to govern in the home, school, business and the nation. Illustrate by:
  - a. The need for standards of weights and measures.
  - b. The need for a police force and civil laws by which we are governed in civil matters.
  - c. The need for laws of ownership of property – purchasing, owning and transferring of property.
2. In view of such mundane things, surely we should recognize the need for authority to govern us in religion, in that which pertains to the soul of man, that which is worth more than the whole of this material world, Mt.16:26.
3. The word authority in the N.T. is translated from the Greek word EXOUSIA.
  - a. The RV usually translates it “authority.”
  - b. The KJV renders it either “authority”; “power”; “right”.
4. To act with authority in religion simply means that one has jurisdiction, or that one acts by the order of or by the instruction of one who has legal or rightful power.
  - a. That, or course, can only the Lord, Mt.17:5; 28:18; Jno.12:48-50; Ac.3:22,23; Col.3:17; Heb.1:1,2; 5:8,9.
5. We must recognize the need for divine authority in religion for what we are to believe, teach and practice and have respect for it once it has been established.

## II. DISCUSSION

### A. THE NEED FOR DIVINE AUTHORITY IN RELIGION IS EMPHATICALLY ILLUSTRATED IN THE O.T. BY STATEMENTS AND EXAMPLES (cf. Rom.15:4; 1Cor.10:11).

1. Statements: Gen.6:13,14a,22; Deut.4:2; Prov.30:5,6.
2. O.T. Examples.
  - a. Cain and Abel, Gen.4:1-7.
    - (1) Abel acted by divine authority, by the authority of God.
      - (a) We know this by Rom.10:17 and Heb.11:4.
      - (b) Since he acted “by faith” and “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,” we know he had offered what God had told him to offer.

- (c) Therefore, both he and his offering were accepted by God.
- (2) Both Cain and his offering, however, were rejected.
  - (a) His sacrifice was not respected by God because it was not what God had commanded or authorized; it was not by faith.
  - (b) Since Cain obviously substituted for what God had authorized, he did not act by faith, or by divine authority, but by his own authority.
  - (c) Thus both he and his offering were rejected!
- (3) He could not violate divine authority with impunity – with exemption from punishment or from the injurious consequences of his actions.
- b. Nadab and Abihu is another O.T. example illustrating the need to act by divine authority in religion, Lev.10:1,2.
  - (1) As priests, the sons of Aaron, the high priest, they had divine authority to burn the incense, Exo.30:1-10; Num.16:36-40; 18:1-7; 2Chr.26:18.
  - (2) Their authority to burn incense was limited to the fire that the Lord had authorized, the fire that he commanded them.
    - (a) The authorized fire must come “from off the altar before the Lord,” Lev.16:12.
    - (b) The fire on the altar “shall ever be burning”; “it shall never go out,” Lev.6:13.
    - (c) They were to “offer no strange incense” on that altar of incense, Exo.30:9.
  - (3) These authorized subjects offered “strange fire before the Lord,” or fire “which he commanded them not,” or “unauthorized fire,” v.1.
  - (4) They acted without divine authority and paid with their lives by a “fire from the Lord,” which “devoured them, and they died before the Lord,” v.2. Cf. Num.3:4; 26:61.
  - (5) Whatever their reason for doing so, they challenged divine authority when they acted by their own authority, or without faith, and a just

God was forced, not only to reject them and their offering, but to punish them for their sin.

- c. Uzziah is still another O.T. example illustrating the need to recognize and act by divine authority, 2Chr.26:16-21.
  - (1) As we learned in the previous example:
    - (a) Burning incense during the O.T. period was a good work because God authorized it.
    - (b) Only Aaron and his sons were authorized to burn incense.
    - (c) They were authorized to burn incense using only the fire taken “from off the altar before the Lord.”
    - (d) Any other fire from any other place was “strange fire” or fire which the Lord did not authorize to be used in burning incense.
  - (2) Uzziah, though a powerful ruler and an important person in Judah, as the king of Judah, not being “of the seed of Aaron,”
    - (a) “Transgressed against the Lord” by going “into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense,” v.16.
    - (b) Was charged by Azariah, the chief priest, and by the 80 priests of the Lord, with presuming to perform an unauthorized service, that which “appertaineth not unto thee...but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense,” vv.17-19.
      - (i) “To belong to as a possession or right; be appropriate”
    - (c) Was justly and severely punished for his unauthorized act, vv.20,21.
  - (3) Is another example that man must act by divine authority in order to be blessed and to avoid the wrath of God.
- d. The O.T. example of Uzza, 2Sam.6:6,7; 1Chr.13:9,10; cf. 15:15; Exo.25:14; Num.4:15.
  - (1) No doubt, he was honest and sincere.
  - (2) But honesty and sincerity do not take the place of nor set aside the need to act by divine authority.
- e. One final O.T. example is that of king Saul in 1Sam.15.
  - (1) What he was authorized to do, vv.1-3.

- (2) What he did, vv.4-9.
- (3) What the Lord said to Samuel concerning what Saul did, vv.10,11.
- (4) Saul's initial claim when Samuel confronted him, vv.12,13.
- (5) Samuel's response to Saul's claim of obedience to the Lord's command, v.14.
- (6) Saul's reply in an effort to justify his action, v.15.
  - (a) Note "for the people spared." Cf. Gen.3:12; Exo.32:21-24.
  - (b) "Spared the best to sacrifice unto the Lord."
- (7) Samuel reminds Saul of what his assignment had been, and asks him why he had refused to obey and instead had done this **evil** in the sight of the Lord, vv.16-19.
- (8) Saul's second claim to have obeyed and his effort to explain what he had done, vv.20,21.
- (9) Samuel then rebukes Saul and explains there is no substitute for obedience, and that his rejection of the word of the Lord has brought about his own rejection by the Lord, vv.22,23.
- (10) Finally, Saul admits he has transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and the Lord's words, but still refuses to fully accept the blame for his sin, v.24.
- (11) For his failure to obey the word of the Lord he was rejected, vv.25-29,35.

**B. THE NEED FOR DIVINE AUTHORITY IN RELIGION IS ALSO EMPHATICALLY ILLUSTRATED IN THE N.T. BY STATEMENTS AND EXAMPLES.**

1. Statements; 1Cor.4:6; 10:31; Gal.1:6-9; Phil.3:16; Col.3:17; 1Tim.1:3; 2Tim.3:16-4:4; 1Pet.4:11; 2Jno.9; Rev.22:18,19; Cf. 1Th.5:21; 1Jno.4:1.
2. Examples or illustrations.
  - a. According to Mt.7:21-23, workers of iniquity will be rejected.
    - (1) "Iniquity" means "lawlessness"
      - (a) They were "lawless ones".
      - (b) They were acting without divine authority.
    - (2) Jesus says in Mt.13:41,42 that the workers of iniquity will be "gathered out of the kingdom" and

“cast...into a furnace of fire” “in the end of this world.” Cf. Rev.21:8.

- (3) They call Jesus “Lord, Lord” but do not do his will as their Lord and Master. Cf. Lk.6:46.
- b. The parable of the two builders – the wise and the foolish builders – in Mt.7:24-27 leaves no doubt about the need for divine authority in matters of faith.
  - (1) The “wise builder” is the one who hears the sayings (the word) of the Lord and does the Lord’s will; he acts by divine authority; he builds upon a rock and is blessed, vv.24,25.
  - (2) The “foolish builder” is the one who hears the sayings (the word) of the Lord, and doeth them not; he acts; he builds upon the sand – he builds or acts without divine authority and is cursed.
  - (3) He is no doubt one of those referred to in Lk.6:46.
- c. The case of the chief priests and the elders of the people questioning Jesus in the temple about his authority to act once again illustrate the need to recognize and respect divine authority in religion, Mt.21:23-27.
  - (1) Their question, v.23.
  - (2) Jesus’ response, v.24:
    - (a) I recognize its legitimacy.
    - (b) I agree to answer your question if first you will answer mine.
  - (3) His question, v.25 – was designed to emphasize the need for recognizing and respecting divine authority in religion rather than mere human authority.
  - (4) This case shows:
    - (a) That Jesus recognized the need for authority.
    - (b) That the Jewish authorities recognized the need for authority, even though they were hypocritical about it and did not always practice it.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

1. Obviously divine authority is needed for what we believe, teach and practice in religion.
2. When one rejects divine authority for faith and practice that one will substitute the will and authority of men or of self. Cf. Mt.15:1-9; 2Tim.4:1-4; Col.2:8,20-23; 1Cor.1:10-13; 4:6.

3. One of the obvious conclusions from what we have established about authority is that there are only two sources of authority in religion, and only one of them is acceptable to God.
  - a. One is from heaven, or divine, and, therefore, acceptable.
  - b. The other is of men, or human, and, therefore, unacceptable. Cf. Jer.10:23; Prov.14:12; Mt.15:9.
4. Those who deny that authority from God is needed for what we believe, teach and practice are left to accept, practice and defend that which is of man. Cf. 2Jno.9-11.
5. Those who claim to believe it is necessary, but who ignore it in teaching and practice are worse off than those who do not believe it is necessary in the first place!