

Expository Files 2.7

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THE FRONT PAGE

Authority In Religion: Three Simple Questions, With Clear Bible Answers

Readers of Expository Files are people from a variety of religious backgrounds. Our mail indicates we are finding a place in the computers of people with all sorts of denominational ties. This is just as the editors intend, and we pray our readership will continue to grow and be diverse.

It is no secret, the editors and writers of EF are members of the church of Christ. This publication is not any "official" journal of a denomination; it is the effort of two men, with the cooperation of others across the country who are members of local churches of Christ.

We emphasize Bible authority in our teaching and preaching, and we would like to share the concept with our readers. Many of the expository articles we've published deal with this. Note Dan King's article in this issue!

We thought it might be good to explain more about this vital matter.

1. WHAT IS AUTHORITY?

Authority can be defined as the right to make laws, and demand obedience thereto. So one who has authority has this right; this right to make laws and demand that the laws be obeyed. In modern life, there are many examples of what's involved in authority: Congress has authority to make laws and

demand obedience to them. A School Board has authority to make rules, to formulate policy and prescribe how funds will be spent.

Throughout various segments of modern society, there are various persons and governing bodies with authority. Authority involves the right to make laws, and demand that they be obeyed. You will observe this use of the word, in Matthew 8:9, where a centurion said to Jesus: "For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come, and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." We can operate on the basis of this definition: Authority is the right to make laws, and demand that they be obeyed.

2.

WHY IS AUTHORITY NEEDED IN RELIGION?

Just look at the condition of modern religion; just look at what is called "Christianity," and what do you see?

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In religion today there is division.

There are hundreds of denominational churches; there are cults and religious organizations and "ministries" of many kinds. There are different doctrines and different practices, yet the common claim that Christ is being served.

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In religion today there is confusion.

The division we've just mentioned; the controversy and diversity causes many people to be very confused. People who are searching and seeking may find it all very confusing. Sometimes - people who are searching for what's right, become so confused -- they just give up. This is sad, but real. Further, in religion today ...

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There is loyalty to men rather than loyalty to God.

IN THE WORD OF GOD ...

The apostle Peter said, in Acts 5:29, "we must obey God rather than men." Many people today, in their practice of religion, are obeying men rather than God; they are bowing down before the creeds and traditions of men.

Do you realize - many of our religious friends and neighbors belong to churches, where the Bible isn't really the guide. They have creeds written by men; the Bible may be quoted, but in reality - - they have THE BAPTIST MANUAL OF FAITH, or THE PRESBYTERIAN CONFSSION OF FAITH, or some other written creed. In some cases - there are UNWRITTEN CREEDS ... I mean - standards, rules and ordinances which come from men, not God; and are enforced or bound upon people.

These rules of manmade origin are completely out of place and an affront to the Lord's authority, no matter where you find them, including in Churches of Christ! So - in the religious world, and among men -- there is often LOYALTY TO MEN RATHER THAN LOYALTY TO GOD.

These are the sad conditions we see. There is division, confusion and loyalty to men. This is why there is the pressing need to address the subject of authority.

3. WHO HAS AUTHORITY IN RELIGION?

Remember, authority is the right to make laws and demand obedience; the religious world today is divided; there is confusion, controversy and loyalty toward men. So, we need to be urgent in asking this question: WHO HAS AUTHORITY IN RELIGION?

If the Pope has all authority, and someone can prove that's the will of God, then we need to do whatever he says. If there is some governing board of denominational officials that has all authority, let someone prove that's the way it is. Then, let's place ourselves in due submission to them.

You see we need to find out, for sure, who has authority in religion then submit to that authority. But, before we submit; before we give heed and obey, let's be sure we are submitting to the authority designated by

Almighty God!

This is a serious matter, this question of who has authority in religion? We're talking about worshipping and serving God! We're talking about knowing for sure what's right and wrong! We're talking about knowing we have forgiveness, and knowing where we will spend eternity!

Before we submit; before we give heed and obey, let's be sure we are submitting to the authority designated by God. Our question is, WHO HAS AUTHORITY in religion ?

God answers, in Matthew 17:5, "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED, HEAR YE HIM!" Doesn't this settle the matter? Our question is simple: WHO HAS AUTHORITY in religion? Who do we turn to, for the right answers; the correct doctrines; the scriptural practices; the approved way of doing things?

WHO HAS AUTHORITY in religion? It's a simple question. And, the answer is just as simple; God says to us, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him!" (Matt. 17:5). If you believe the Bible, and respect the Word of God, you will accept this answer.

But, there's more. In Matthew 28:18, Jesus said: "All authority hath been given to Me, in heaven and on earth." What problem is there, in seeing this truth? The question is: WHO HAS AUTHORITY IN RELIGION? God says, "Jesus Christ this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear He Him!" Jesus says, "ALL AUTHORITY HATH BEEN GIVEN TO ME, IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH."

Thus, in determining what's right and wrong morally; and, in deciding what to believe and do in your relationship before God, what book must you consult? Do you have a New Testament?

Passages For Further Study & Reference:

[Matt. 28:18-20](#)

[Acts 2:42](#)

[Eph. 5:17](#)

[Phil. 4:7](#)

[2 Jno. 9](#)
