**God’s Plan for Me Lesson 3: The Authority of Christ**

The study of Christianity includes learning the meaning of religious authority. Who is the source of authority in Christianity? How is authority revealed to us?

God, the all-powerful creator of the universe, is the source of religious authority. God is the supreme ruler of the universe. The writer of the book of Hebrews said that God, “*made the world”* (Hebrews 1:2). He further states that God now declares His will to all humankind through His Son, Jesus Christ. “*God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world”* (Hebrews 1:1-2). Many centuries before Christ lived on earth, people followed God by accepting the authority of Moses and the prophets. Now, however, God reveals His will to us through Jesus Christ.

The New Testament writer Matthew tells us of the time when God showed His approval of His Son. On this occasion Moses, the Old Testament lawgiver, and Elijah, the Old Testament prophet, were with Christ on a mountain. Matthew wrote, *“While He was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, ‘This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him’”* (Matthew 17:5). This command of God for everyone to accept Jesus’ teaching was given before His death on the cross. After Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, His authority, or law, took the place of the Old Testament law. For more information, read Galatians 3:19, 24-25, Colossians 2:14, Hebrews 8:7-13, 10:9-10.

It is useless for us to try to please God today by obeying the teachings of Moses and the prophets of the Old Testament. Instead, we must accept the teaching of Jesus Christ. His divine law is given in the New Testament Scriptures. The person who refuses the authority of Christ is guilty of refusing the will of God (Luke 10:16). The one who accepts the authority of Christ accepts the will of God (John 7:16, 17:4, 8).

God is the source of all religious authority. How is authority revealed to us? God reveals His authority to us through His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus declared this truth in these words: *“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth’”* (Matthew 28:18). How much authority in heaven and earth belongs to Jesus Christ? All authority! Therefore, we must not accept anything as true and divine in religion which does not agree with the authority of Jesus. By His authority Jesus has given us all of the teaching we need in order to be saved and live Christian lives which are acceptable to God. For more information, read John 6:68-69, 17:3, 2 Peter 1:3.

The supreme authority of Jesus Christ is revealed in the superior place given Him by our Heavenly Father. The apostle Paul wrote about the power of God: “*…which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all”* (Ephesians 1:20-23). For more information, read Philippians 2:8-11, Colossians 2:9-10, and 1 Peter 3:22.

The New Testament presents Jesus Christ as:



* Divine (John 1:1-5)
* Prophet (Acts 7:37)
* Savior (Titus 2:11-14)
* King (1 Timothy 6:14-15)
* High Priest (Hebrews 7:23-8:5)

These scriptures emphasize the *superiority* and *authority* of Jesus Christ.

Accepting the authority of Jesus Christ further means accepting the authority of the New Testament teaching of His apostles. To reject the apostles’ teaching is to reject Christ’s authority (Luke 10:16). The apostles were the Lord’s personal messengers, or witnesses, on earth. To these inspired apostles Jesus declared, *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth"* (Acts 1:8). *“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God”* (2 Corinthians 5:20). *“We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error”* (1 John 4:6). Also read 1 John 1:1-4.

The person who accepts the authority of Jesus Christ will also accept the New Testament teaching, which came through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Before Jesus left the earth to return to His Father in heaven, He promised to send the Holy Spirit to His apostles to bear witness of Jesus Christ and instruct them in His teaching and authority, so that they could proclaim Him and His teaching to all mankind (John 14:26, 15:26-27). Through New Testament teaching, the Holy Spirit convicts people concerning, “…*sin and righteousness and judgment”* (John 16:8).

The Holy Spirit, in guiding the apostles in all truth, always expressed the authority and glory of Jesus Christ. Jesus promised His apostles: *"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you"* (John 16:13-14).

Those who claim a special revelation from the Holy Spirit, but whose teachings are contrary to the gospel of Christ, are fakes. All the revelation given by inspiration through the Holy Spirit is included in the New Testament scriptures. They teach us that if we do what the Bible does not authorize or approve, we are without Christ. John explained, “*Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son”* (2 John 9).

Because Jesus Christ is the supreme authority in religion and the Savior of all people, we must go to His teaching to learn what we must do to be saved. Before Jesus returned to heaven after His death and resurrection, He gave to His apostles the Great Commission, which revealed the terms of salvation through Christ. Three records are given of this commission:

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age”* (Matthew 28:19-20).

*“And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned’”* (Mark 16:15-16).

*“And He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.’ You are witnesses of these things”* (Luke 24:46-48).

These words indicate that one must believe in Christ, repent of sins, and be baptized in order to receive salvation in the Lord. Following lessons will explain these steps in greater detail. We have salvation in Christ only when we submit to His will. To reject any part of His teaching is to reject the authority of Christ.

Jesus Christ, the first authority in life, will also be the first authority in the Day of Judgment. “*For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man”* (John 5:26-27).

Each person’s life will be judged by the teaching of Christ. Jesus said, *“He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day”* (John 12:48). Therefore, we must be certain that we fully submit ourselves to His authority.

Jesus the Son of God and supreme authority in Christianity gives a loving and tender invitation for all people to come to Him for salvation: *"Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light"* (Matthew 11:28-30). *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me”* (Revelation 3:20).

**True or False (write T or F in the blank):**

\_F\_ 1. We should follow the authority of Moses today.

\_F\_ 2. Only part of religious authority belongs to Christ.

\_T\_ 3. It is necessary to follow the apostles’ teaching.

\_T\_ 4. The Holy Spirit revealed God’s truth to the apostles.

\_F\_ 5. All the sinner must do to be saved is to repent of sins.

\_F\_ 6. One can reject Jesus without rejecting God.

\_T\_ 7. Jesus is the supreme authority in religious matters.

\_T\_ 8. All must appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

\_F\_ 9. Family customs are a legitimate standard of judgment.

\_F\_ 10. The Holy Spirit still gives new revelations not found in the New Testament.

**Multiple Choice (write the letter in the blank):**

\_B\_ 11. *“All \_\_\_\_\_ has been given to Me in heaven and on earth”* (Matthew 28:18).

 **a - glory b - authority c - power**

\_A\_ 12. *“Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ does not have God”* (2 John 9).

 **a - teaching b - grace c - shadow**

\_C\_ 13. The apostles were the Lord’s \_\_\_\_\_ on earth (Acts 1:8).

 **a - slaves b - friends c - witnesses**

\_A\_ 14. God is the supreme source of all religious \_\_\_\_\_ which is shown through Jesus (Ephesians 1:20-23).

 **a - authority b - tradition c - entertainment**

\_B\_ 15. Jesus promised to send the \_\_\_\_\_ to guide His apostles in His teaching (John 16:13-14).

 **a - Pope b - Holy Spirit c - pastor**

\_B\_ 16. *“In the beginning was the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ was with God, and the \_\_\_\_\_ was God”* (John 1:1).

 **a - sun b - Word c - earth**

\_B\_ 17. Jesus made it clear that his teaching was not his but \_\_\_\_\_ (John 7:16).

 **a - Peter’s b - God’s c - an angel’s**

\_C\_ 18. On the last day people will be judged by \_\_\_\_\_ (John 12:48).

 **a - an angel b - a priest c - the words of Jesus**

\_A\_ 19. Those who believe and are baptized shall be \_\_\_\_\_ (Mark 16:16).

 **a - saved b - condemned c - made angels**

\_C\_ 20. Jesus said that his burden is \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 11:28-30).

 **a - difficult b - heavy c - light**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

***Four Lakes Church of Christ  302 Acewood Boulevard  Madison, WI 53714-2511  www.fourlakescoc.org *** ***fourlakeschurch@gmail.com***