

Prayer List

Sheila
Ophelia
Josh
Daniel
Olene

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 9:50 a.m.
Assembly 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Pinole Tidings

www.pinolechurchofchrist.com

Vol. 13, No. 37 - June 24, 2012

Elders:

Brad Behrens - bradbehrens@pinolechurchofchrist.com
Michael Odom - MichaelOdom@pinolechurchofchrist.com
Ernie Sprinkel - preacher@pinolechurchofchrist.com

This Week's Question:

Who longed for a drink from the well at Bethlehem?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

Habakkuk - Habakkuk 3:1, 3, 9, 13, 19

Published by the church of Christ which meets at 755 Pinole Valley Road, Pinole, CA 94564, Phone (510) 724-1994, (Mailing address: church of Christ, P.O. Box 453, Pinole, CA 94564)

The Logic of Authority

Someone has to be in charge. It only makes sense. While we may dream of a society where there are few laws, just imagine having no laws. Take away all speed limits, all road rules, all laws dealing with lanes and directions, and where do you think that will get us? Without rules, authority, and the ability to back it up, society cannot long survive in any civilized fashion. Even Utopia had its rules that were punished upon violation. Read the book.

The same is true of other areas of life: school, business, and the home all require authority. Acting like no one is ever in charge is not a situation anyone can long stand. "Isn't anyone in charge here?" bellows the customer who can't seem to find answers to the most basic questions. "Can I talk to someone in authority? Can I see your manager?" There is always an expectation that someone is in charge, and we often recognize that going "to the top" is the only way to get something done. Again, it only makes sense. And we know it does. No further proof is needed.

So why should morality and religion be any different? Suddenly we can become our own authority, acting like we are the ones in charge of how to serve and glorify God. We want to be Christians. We want to give God all the glory. We want to praise God with all our hearts. But we want to do it our way, defining Christianity by our own terms, expecting God to accept our "humble" service. After all, what kind of a God would refuse to accept the praise of those who so lovingly and whole-heartedly gave it? He is the passive audience isn't He? We get to perform however we wish and God will just curtsy to us and tell us

how great we've done. That's what any parent will do for a little child just doing his best.

A bit overstated? Perhaps, but I don't think by much. Have we not read? "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'" (Matthew 7:21-23, NASU)

Not that verse! Let's face it. Calling Jesus "Lord" doesn't always work. What does work is the direct link between calling Jesus "Lord" and actually doing what He says. Those who do what He says from the heart are the ones who take His Lordship seriously. They are the ones who have built upon the foundation of Jesus and His Lordship. Read Matthew 7:24-29. Jesus taught with authority. Since the Lordship of Jesus is all about authority His (Matthew 28:18), then accepting His Lordship necessarily entails submitting to His authority. How can it be any other way? It's not a choice between the heart and obedience. It's obedience with heart. Let's stop trying to turn this into some kind of false dichotomy.

Something else about Matthew 7:21-23 screams authority: what do we want to enter but the "kingdom" of heaven? When we see the word "kingdom," we ought to think of God's rule. It is "of heaven," entirely within God's control and power. Since God is in charge of heaven, He is not obliged to accept just anyone who utters the words that pay lip service to Him. No. We really must take His authority seriously. Calling Jesus, "Lord," then minimizing His authority through our actions is hypocritical. "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46) We may feel offended by the idea. We may wish to buck against it. But there it is. Fight it if you wish. Jesus and authority are forever linked. And accepting His Lordship means we accept that all the authority belongs to Him and none to us. That's right: "None of self and all of Thee."

Suppose, though, that people wish to reject the idea of authority altogether. Then where exactly will they turn? Themselves? Others? Are we really to believe that they will reject all authority? It's not even possible. The logic of authority is that there is no escaping it. Authority is basic because no one can avoid it. It is logically self-evident. Even if people try to avoid God's authority, they will still rely on another source for the authority by which they do anything--their own or another's. To

contradict the point is self-defeating. Try refuting it without thinking yourself or someone else to be the authority somehow who is "in the know" with the power to do anything about it.

But once we reject God as the ultimate authority, then we are left with people. Really? Like atheist Jean-Paul Sartre once said, without God somebody has to invent values and it might as well be "me." But do we really want people to be our ultimate source of authority? Yet this is the very choice Jesus put to the chief priests and elders of His day (Matthew 7:23-27). They wanted to know by what authority Jesus did what He did. After all Jesus was pretty brash. He was healing and teaching in the Temple, paying no real regard to the position held by the chief priests. And of all things He had the audacity to turn the tables of the moneychangers over. What an embarrassment for them! Who does Jesus think He is? Where did He get the authority to act that way? It was a good question. But Jesus "turned the tables" again, this time on their question. What was the authority for John's baptism? "From heaven or from men?" What other options are there? If not from God, then who or what? If we reject God's authority, then the only authority left is from men. Fallible, selfish men. They knew they couldn't answer the question without trapping themselves. Once again, Jesus was the Master of the situation.

So people want to reject God's authority and only accept the authority of men. Here then is an interesting dilemma for them. Suppose the response is, "The Bible is just a book from men." The ones who argue this are now relying on their own authority. For the sake of argument, let's just say the Bible comes only from men, the same fundamental source that the skeptics have. Then what makes the Bible's authority any less or worse than the authority relied upon by its doubters? If it is only from men, and the doubter's authority is only from men, then who's to say that either is better or worse? Why can't I use the Bible while they use other human authority? Why should they even care? And why should I care what they think?

Authority is logical. It is self-evident. It is necessary. Why not accept that and then make sure that our source for authority is greater and better than we can provide all by ourselves? (Doy Moyer)