

AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

Matt. 28:18

INTRODUCTION

1. This is a very important subject.
2. We must have STANDARDS and AUTHORITY in all the affairs of life, otherwise chaos would fill the earth.
 - (1) We need authority for what side of the road to drive on.
 - (2) We need authority for how fast one can drive.
 - (3) We need a standard for the value of money
 - (4) There are standards in weights and measures.
 - (5) There are standards in time zones and time.
 - (6) Imagine the disorder that would prevail if each man set his own standards.
3. In religion today we see division and confusion of every sort because men have rejected the TRUE STANDARD -- The New Testament -- the authority of Christ.
4. Let us look at some of the STANDARDS men sometimes use for authority in religion.

I. SOME USE THE TRADITIONS OF MEN AS AUTHORITY

1. The Roman Catholic church does not believe the New Testament is SUFFICIENT.
 - (1) In a tract, *"To Whom Shall We Go?"* the question: "Is not the Bible the sufficient source and rule of faith?"
 1. Page 7: "No; The Bible alone is altogether insufficient, for different reasons."
 - (2) The Council of Trent decreed: "That the oral traditions of the Catholic church are to be received with equal piety and reverence as the Books of the Old and New Testament" *Council of Trent*, Fourth Session.
 2. Jesus showed the sinfulness of following tradition in Matthew 15; 1 - 9.
 3. Paul warns about tradition in Col. 2:8

II. SOME ACCEPT THE RELIGION OF THEIR FATHERS AND MOTHERS.

1. But, they are NOT the standard.
2. Our fore-parents were not agreed.
3. Each person , when he traces back seven generations, has 128 "parents".
4. Paul had to give up the religion of his ancestors -- Gal. 1:14
5. Jesus said we must love Him more than Father and Mother -- Matt. 10: 34 - 37

III. SOME ACCEPT THEIR "FEELINGS" AS AUTHORITY.

1. Personal feelings vary from individual to individual.
2. The same thing experienced by two persons produces different feelings.
3. Our feelings are affected by what we believe, whether true or false.
 - (1) This is seen in Jacob's believing the false report of Joseph's death -- Gen. 37: 23 - 36

(2) The mourning could not have been greater if the report had been true.

IV. "LET YOUR CONSCIENCE BE YOUR GUIDE" IS THE STANDARD OF SOME.

1. The conscience of man is NOT a guide.
2. The conscience of man is that part of the mind that judges man's conduct in accord with what the intellect knows and understands to be right.
3. The conscience restrains from what we understand to be wrong, and urges us in what we understand to be right.
4. The conscience can go no further than the limits of our understanding.
5. The conscience is a "knowing one's self" -- an "inward awareness of inner self".
6. A good conscience is when we do what we have been taught is right -- Acts 23: 1
7. The word of God is the guide, NOT the conscience -- Psa. 119: 105

V. SOME ACCEPT THE VERDICT OF THE MAJORITY AS THEIR STANDARD

1. The majority WHERE? -- the majority varies:
 - (1) In Eastern Asia -- Buddhism
 - (2) In North Africa -- Mohammedanism
 - (3) In Italy -- Roman Catholicism
 - (4) In Utah -- Mormanism
2. God forbade the Israelites from "*following a multitude to do evil*" --Ex. 23:2
3. In Noah's day the majority was lost -- I Pet. 3:20
4. The Majority are lost TODAY -- Matt. 7: 13 - 14

VI. SOME ACCEPT THE CREEDS OF MEN AS AUTHORITY

1. Creeds are unreliable -- Jer. 10: 23
2. Creeds are insufficient
 - (1) Creeds have to be revised.
3. Creeds are unenforceable.
4. Creeds conflict with each other.
5. Creeds conflict with the word of God.

V. THE NEW TESTAMENT IS OUR ONLY RELIABLE STANDARD

1. It is PERFECT -- James 1:25
2. It is AUTHORITATIVE -- John 12:48
3. It is INTELLIGIBLE -- Eph. 3:4; 5:17
4. It is UNIVERSAL -- Matt. 28: 19 - 20
5. It needs NO revision -- I Pet. 1: 25; Matt. 24:35
6. It is God's power to save man -- Rom. 1: 16 - 17

7. It holds the answer to man's personal problems:
 - (1) Man's relationship to God.
 - (2) Man's relationship to his fellowman.
 - (3) Man's relationship to his own conscience.
8. The living Word is sufficient to meet living issues:
 - (1) Moral problems
 - (2) Sectarianism
 - (3) Evangelism

CONCLUSION

Donald Townsley

(River Bend 2000)