

From Where I Sit . . .

By What Authority Doest Thou These Things?

We can understand man's need for authority in every walk of life. We drive a car by the authority of a driver's license. We write checks by the authority of a previously made deposit. We get married by the authority of a marriage license. Little can be done in life without proper authorization. Isn't it reasonable that in religion man must also have the proper authorization for what he does?

In Matthew 21:23, the chief priests and elders approached Christ with this same fundamental question. "By what authority doest thou these things?" In their case, they were threatened by His claims to Divinity, His teachings, His miracles, and His act of overturning the money changers' tables and driving those out of the temple who made a mockery of its use. It was absolutely essential that His authority be established and that they learn to submit to it. Even so must we learn to submit.

The diversity of religious doctrines and feelings rampant today forces us to ask, "By what authority do you do those things which you do?" and, "Does it really make any difference?" Every religious person should welcome these questions and the opportunity they bring to give "a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear," (I Pet. 3:15).

Colossians 3:17 teaches us, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.." "In the name of" suggests "by the authority of." This is consistent with Peter's admonition in 1 Peter 4:11, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God..."

We have an obligation to speak a "thus sayeth the Lord" when it comes to religious matters. Frankly, my opinion is no better, and I'd like to think no worse than the next man's. There certainly are some areas where I might respect one man's opinion over another based on his expertise in a given field. But no "expert" has the right to define policy for God or put words in the mouth of Jesus.

Study carefully the text of 2 Peter 1:20 - 2:3, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost...." It is very possible that many of us take a lot for granted in our religious practices. We should be certain if we are doing the will of the Lord or of man. What is your AUTHORITY?"

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