**Authority of God**

Before we engage in any religious activity, we must understand by what authority we are acting. Jesus recognized that there are only two sources of religious authority: Heaven or Men (Mt. 21:25). He further taught us that teaching and following the commandments of men will render our service to God vain (Mt. 15:9). If then Heaven is the only legitimate source of religious authority, how are we to know what religious activities are sanctioned in Heaven?

**God the Father has primary authority.** There is one God and Father of all who is ***over all***, through all and in all (Eph 4-6). Even Jesus who is God the Son is subject to the Father (1 Cor. 15:27-28).

**The Father has delegated all authority to the Son.** Before ascending into Heaven, Jesus told His disciples, “All authority has been given unto me in Heaven and in earth” (Mt. 28:18). The Father has placed Jesus “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named…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” (Eph 1:20-23) Because all authority has been given to Jesus, it stands to reason that everything we say and do must be by His authority (Col. 3:17).

**Jesus, in turn, has delegated authority to His apostles.** Jesus sent His disciples into the world just as His Father had sent Him into the world (John 17:17-18). He told them that He had given them the authority to bind and loose on earth what had already been bound and loosed in Heaven (Mt. 18:18). They were not free to legislate on God’s behalf, they were simply conveying to us what had already been decided in Heaven. The only way these men could know the will of Heaven was for the Holy Spirit to reveal God’s will to them (1 Cor. 2:9-13).

**Inspired men wrote down the will of God (scripture).** Paul said that he, like other inspired men, had written down the mystery of Christ in a few words so that we could gain his understanding when we read his writings (Eph. 3:1-5). Because God delegated all authority to Jesus and the Holy Spirit inspired holy apostles and prophets to teach and write on Jesus’ behalf, we can be sure that our religious activities are by Heaven’s authority by looking to the inspired scriptures as our only rule of faith and practice (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

**The Testament of Jesus Christ (New Testament).** The Old Testament is as much the word of God as the New, however it was given by God for a specific purpose. It was given to the Jews to act as a “tutor” to lead us to Christ. Now that faith in Christ has come, we are no longer under a tutor (Gal. 3:24-25). The giving of a new covenant has made the old obsolete (Heb. 8:13). The handwriting of ordinances that was against us and contrary to us has been taken away, nailed to the cross of Jesus (Col. 2:14). While the Old Testament can be helpful and instructive, we must look exclusively to the New Testament for authority for our religious activities today.

**Conclusion**. All religious activity is either by the authority of the God of Heaven, or by the authority of men. The inspired scriptures reveal the mind of God because his authority was delegated, first to Jesus His Son, then to the apostles who wrote the scriptures by inspiration. God’s power has granted us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the teachings of the New Testament.

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