

AUTHORITY IN RELIGION (1)

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **Mark 7:1-13**. From Roy H. Enoch (05/22/1994).
- B. Every government has a head that represents its authority.
 - 1. In the city, it is the Mayor, in the state, it is the Governor, and in the federal government it is the president, and in religion it is God.
- C. Authority may be of three kinds in religion:
 - 1. Inherent authority--vested in God, its source.
 - 2. Delegated authority, such as Christ gave the apostles in Mt. 28:18-20.
 - 3. Usurped authority, that which is claimed by false teachers.
- D. It is essential that we confirm the authority in our religion.
 - 1. It is just as essential to be right religiously, as it is to be religious.
 - 2. Is our religion right in the sight of God?
- E. All the way through the Bible there are stories of the conflict between authorized and unauthorized religion.
- F. No man knows what is acceptable unless God has spoken to authorize it.
- G. We want to study religious authority:
 - 1. Some examples of authorized and unauthorized religion.
 - 2. Jesus' teachings to the Scribes and Pharisees on the subject of religious authority.

I. EXAMPLES OF AUTHORIZED AND UNAUTHORIZED RELIGION.

- A. Adam and Eve were told how to serve God.
 - 1. They were to dress and keep the garden.
 - 2. They could eat of the fruit of any tree except the tree of knowledge of good and evil.
 - 3. Eve clearly told Satan what God had said, so she understood.
 - 4. But Satan contradicted God and said that she would have greater blessing (knowledge of good and evil) if she ate.
 - 5. They were punished as God had promised when they did the unauthorized act of eating.
- B. Cain and Able must also have had instruction on worship.
 - 1. First of all, they had the example of the consequences of parents' disobedience.
 - 2. They must also have had directions on what sacrifices to offer, because the Hebrew writer says that Able offered his sacrifice "by faith" (Heb. 11:4).
 - 3. "By faith" means following the directions of God's word rather than doing as we please (Rom. 10:17).
 - 4. If an unauthorized act can be "by faith" then there was no difference between Abel's and Cain's offerings.
 - 5. But Abel's was "by faith" and accepted: Cain's was rejected.
 - 6. God told Cain to "do well" and he would also be accepted (Gen. 4:6-7).
 - 7. Cain was the first in a long line of men who substituted what they preferred for what God had commanded.
- C. Noah was faithful to do what God authorized.
 - 1. See Heb. 11:7.
 - 2. God commanded Noah to build an ark (Gen. 6:14).
 - 3. Each specification limited what Noah could do "by faith."
 - 4. But Noah trusted God enough to follow instructions (Gen. 6:22).
- D. Abraham was called the "father of the faithful."
 - 1. He was "faithful" because he followed God's directions.
 - a. He left his land and people (Gen. 12:1; Heb. 11:8-10).
 - b. He offered Isaac as God commanded.

- 2. Could he have been "faithful" if he had followed his own reasoning about how to worship God?
- E. When Nadab and Abihu offered fire that God did not command, they were burned to death by the Lord.
 - 1. He explained to their father Aaron why they were punished (Lev. 10:3).
 - 2. God also forbade their father and younger brothers to grieve over their deaths because of their disobedience (Lev. 10:6).
 - 3. God is regarded as "holy" and is "glorified" when we trust Him enough and love Him enough to do what He says.

II. JESUS TAUGHT THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES ABOUT AUTHORITY.

- A. After Jesus had walked on water to the disciples in the ship, and they came to the land of Gennesaret, Scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem came to Him.
- B. When they saw some of the disciples eat without washing their hands, which was contrary to the Jew's tradition: They asked Jesus why they did this (Mt. 15:8-9).
- C. We need to understand what this Jewish tradition was and why it made worship vain or worthless.
 - 1. Long after the time of Moses, a tradition arose that God gave Moses, not only the law, but a system of oral law.
 - 2. It was contended that this came down through generations thereafter by word of mouth.
 - 3. About the time of Christ this unwritten law began to be written down.
 - 4. Still later, comments and opinions upon it were written.
 - 5. The oral law was called the MISHNA, and the commentary, the GEMARA, and the two comprise the TALMUD.
 - 6. Jesus called it "the commandments of men," in sharp contrast to the word and commandment of God.
- D. Many religious people today follow religious tradition.
- E. These Scribes and Pharisees could not find fault with Jesus nor His disciples as to their obedience to God's law.
- F. So they objected to their disregard of their tradition.
 - 1. See Mark 7:5.
 - 2. From the Pharisee's standpoint, it was no trivial question.
 - 3. They taught that these traditions had all the force of divine commands.
 - 4. Jesus points out that they were just man-made creed.
- G. Jesus' reply that human doctrine makes worship to God worthless is still gospel today (Mk. 7:7,9).
- H. What commands of God did the Pharisees reject with their traditions?
 - 1. God had not said, "You shall not wash your hands before you eat," but He had said: see Deut. 12:32; 4:2.
- I. It seems that there is always a tendency to either add or restrict.
 - 1. Those who are conscientious about doing what God says are more likely to make restrictions than God did not make.
 - 2. Those who are interested in doing as they please are more likely to allow things that God did not permit.
- J. Either error is equally condemned.

CONCLUSION.

- A. Christ taught the Pharisees that man's traditions set aside God's word.
- B. All additions to, changes in, or subtractions from, God's law are an infringement on God's authority.
- C. Jewish tradition did to God's authority exactly what today's religious tradition does: set it aside for

man's will.

1. These unauthorized acts divide the religious world.
 2. Men today do not like to admit that their traditions are without authority today, any more than the Pharisees did.
 3. Note, that God had not forbidden washing hands.
 4. But this silence meant that they could not require it.
 5. Washing hands is an entirely innocent, harmless act.
 6. Yet when it was made a religious rite, Christ condemned it as making their worship vain or useless, and that it set aside God's law.
 7. The two most popular arguments in defense of unauthorized worship today are:
 - a. The Bible does not say not to do it.
 - b. It is an innocent act and there is no harm in it.
 8. Those who argue that way today reject the teachings of X to the Scribes and Pharisees.
- D. Our faith in God must be strong enough that we will do whatever He says whether we know why or not.
- E. Jesus said that we will be judged by His word (Jn. 12:48; 14:15).