

AUTHORITY IN RELIGION (2)

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **Matthew 7:24-27**. From Roy H. Enoch (07/03/1994).
- B. Being religious is not important unless we are right religiously.
 - 1. Some say that WHAT we believe and do is not important: it is only important how SINCERELY we believe.
 - 2. Sincerity is important, and God requires it for acceptable worship, but He also requires our worship be true or according to His will (Jn. 4:24).
- C. "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority? (Mt. 21:23).
 - 1. These questions were asked of Jesus by the chief priests and the elders of the people as He was teaching in the temple.
 - a. The day before He had made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem.
 - b. He then went into the temple and drove out those who bought and sold, and overturned the tables of the money changers.
 - c. He healed the blind and the lame who came to Him.
 - d. Now he was teaching the people.
 - 2. The questions were important, but they were not really sincere in asking them.
 - a. He said that He would tell them if they told Him by what authority John baptized.
 - b. They had rejected the baptism of John so they could not admit that it was from God, but since the people thought that John was a prophet, they could not say that he was from men.
 - c. So they said that they could not answer, and Jesus said, that neither would He answer.
- D. We must be able to answer these questions today.
 - 1. See 1Pet. 3:15.
 - 2. Every religious act must be "by faith."
 - a. We must believe that it is right (Rom. 14:23; "faith" here is conscience).
 - b. It must come from God's word (Rom. 10:17).
 - 3. Noah built the ark "by faith" (Heb. 11:7) because he followed God's directions (Gen. 6:22).
 - 4. Cain thought it would be all right to offer grain for a sacrifice instead of the lamb which Able offered "by faith."
 - a. God rejected the substitute because it was not "well."
 - b. He still rejects man's doing as he pleases (Lk. 16:15).
- E. In our lesson we want to study the principle Jesus taught in the parable of building our house (or life) on different foundations.
 - 1. We must build on the "rock" of obedience to His word.
 - 2. God's word determines what we can do in the Church.
 - 3. We need to test things found in Churches today by God's word.
- I. **WE MUST BUILD ON THE "ROCK" OF OBEDIENCE TO HIS WORD.**
 - A. Jesus clearly identifies the one who builds on the rock: Mt. 7:24.
 - 1. Only those who trust Jesus enough and love Him enough to do what HE SAYS really have "faith" or "believe in Him."
 - 2. Anything else is to follow our own judgment or trying to please men (Gal. 1:10).
 - B. Those who "hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them" builds his house on the sand (Mt. 7:26).
 - 1. Nearly every church in existence today has rules and regulations that are not found in the teachings of Christ.
 - 2. The Pharisees of Jesus' day had a creed book: it was called the Talmud.
 - a. They first practiced these acts as customs, and later claimed that God had authorized them all along.

- b. Jesus gave God's evaluation of man's traditions in Mt. 15:9 (from Isa. 29:13).
- 3. Some of the most severe condemnations in the NT are made by Jesus of these "commandments of men."

II. GOD'S WORD DETERMINES WHAT WE CAN DO IN THE CHURCH.

- A. God has always expected man to trust Him enough to do what He says.
 - 1. Cain was rejected when he offered grain.
 - 2. Nadab and Abihu were burned by fire from heaven when they offered fire that God did not command them to use.
 - 3. God told the children of Israel: Deut. 12:32.
 - 4. It was a matter of "faith" that they did exactly what God told them to do.
- B. It is still a matter of faith today as Jesus taught in this parable.
 - 1. The same principle is taught at the close of the NT. Rev. 22:18-19
 - 2. Therefore, we are limited in what we can do in worship by what God commands in His word.

III. WE MUST TEST THINGS DONE IN CHURCHES TODAY BY GOD'S WORD.

- A. A person wants to bring a lamb for a sacrifice.
 - 1. What is his authority for it?
 - 2. He says that it was commanded in the Old Testament.
 - 3. But Jesus said that he came to fulfill the Law.
 - 4. Paul said that if a Christian goes back to the Law for a doctrine like circumcision, he falls from grace (Gal. 5:4).
- B. One wants to burn incense to accompany prayers as mentioned in Revelation.
 - 1. See Rev. 5:8,9.
 - 2. The symbolism of Revelation was from the Old Testament worship.
 - 3. The passage itself shows what the "incense" and "harps" represent:
 - a. "...golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."
 - b. The harps are identified as, "And they sang a new song."
 - 4. Many other symbols and figures are used in the language of Revelation.
 - 5. We need to look at clear passages in the New Testament which describe the worship.
- C. One wants to baptize a baby.
 - 1. Not a single infant is mentioned as being baptized or needing to be baptized in the NT.
 - 2. The authority for this is in the creeds and doctrines of men.
- D. Some want to add instruments of music to the singing that is commanded for the Lord's church.
 - 1. There is not a single command for them or instance of their use in the church in the NT.
 - 2. One has to go to the OT for the authority for them and that is not in the church.
 - 3. We have already seen that Paul says that to go back to the OT for doctrine, a Christian loses his blessings in Christ and falls from grace.
- E. Some want to observe the Sabbath day.
 - 1. Sometimes the apostles went to the synagogue on the Sabbath to teach them the gospel.
 - 2. There is no reference to the Church worshipping on that day.
 - 3. The Sabbath Day was a part of the Law that was taken away on the cross by Christ (Col. 2:14-17).
 - 4. The Sabbath, or "rest" was only given to Israel because they were slaves in Egypt and this "day of rest" reminded them that God had delivered them (Deut. 5:15).
- F. Some want to vote people into and out of the church.
 - 1. Men cannot vote one into or out of the Lord's church.

2. Only the Lord can add to His church or kingdom.
 3. Men can only do what they want in the churches they establish.
- G. Some want to pray for God's power to convert the sinner.
1. Paul says that the gospel is God's power to save, for those who believe it. Rom. 1:16
 2. In the New Testament, sinners are told to believe, repent and be baptized, but never to pray for converting power.
 3. The authority for this doctrine is from men.
- H. Some want an organization over the local churches with a man over the churches in a region.
1. Christ is the only authority over more than one church.
 2. The authority for the hierarchy is from men, and not God.
- I. Some want to call the preacher, Pastor, or Reverend.
1. Jesus condemned the Jewish teachers for wanting to be called by religious titles, and told the apostles that they could not be called "rabbi" or call any man "father" as a title (Mt. 23:8-12).
 2. No person in the church is called "Pastor" or "Reverend."
 3. The authority is from men's creeds.
- J. Some want a presiding elder or bishop over several congregations.
1. In the New Testament, a group of men were over each church.
 2. Any more extensive organization is from men.
- K. Some teach that one is saved by his faith only.
1. James says that we are saved by obedience (Jas. 2:24).
 2. Jesus says that one who does not obey His sayings is building his house or life on sand and that it will fall.

CONCLUSION.

- A. Jesus said that He had all authority (Mt. 28:18).
- B. Each time something is brought into the church that He did not command, we reject His authority, and act on our own authority.
- C. That makes our religion vain or worthless.
- D. Let us love Him enough to want to please Him and trust Him enough to do what He says.