

FROM HEAVEN OR FROM MEN?

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: [Matthew 21:23-27](#). From Roy H. Enoch (01-22-1995).
- B. The chief priests, elders, scribes, Pharisees, and other Jewish leaders were constantly trying to trap Jesus that they might condemn Him.
 - 1. This occasion was in the last week of His personal ministry.
 - a. The day before, he had made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem.
 - b. Then He went into the temple and drove out the sellers and moneychangers (Mt. 21:13-14).
 - c. The chief priests and scribes saw the miracles, but were indigent when the children cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David."
 - d. He then left and spent the night at Bethany.
 - 2. On the next day He came to the temple and the chief priests and the elders confronted Him:
 - a. They "confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, 'By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave You this authority?'"
 - b. Jesus told them that He would tell them the authority by which He did those things IF they would tell Him the where the baptism of John was from: "From heaven or from men?"
- C. This is a question that still needs to be asked frequently today.
 - 1. Xians are commanded to be ready to answer this question (1Pet. 3:15).
 - 2. We are also to question others and search the Scriptures to see if what they teach is from God (Ac. 17:11; 1Jn. 4:1).
- D. In this lesson, we want to apply Jesus' question to present-day teachings.

I. IS YOUR METHOD OF SALVATION FROM GOD?

- A. Jesus told His apostles to preach (Mk. 16:16; Ac. 2:38).
Our faith in X and our love for Him is shown by our doing what He says without doubt or rebellion.
- B. Sometimes people show that they are not "trusting" the Lord, but their own judgment.
 - 1. Have you ever heard someone say, "I don't see any sense in being baptized?" or any other command of Christ?
 - 2. They are plainly saying that they follow their own judgment, rather than accepting the teachings of Christ by faith.
 - 3. Faith accepts without having to know why or seeing sense in it.
 - 4. Those who have to see "sense" in what they are doing are not trusting Jesus to know what is best but doing as THEY please.
- C. We must study all that the NT says about salvation, or any other subject rather than pick a verse that we like and reject others.
 - 1. Most of our traffic laws do not mention that one needs a drivers license to drive a car on the public roads.
 - 2. But there are a few statutes that require a driver's license.
 - 3. For one to refuse to get a driver's license, and argue that there are several laws that do not mention it is like quoting some verses that do not mention baptism and then argue that it isn't required.

II. IS YOUR CHURCH FROM HEAVEN OR FROM MEN?

- A. Jesus built only one church (Mt. 16:18).
 - 1. Some claim that X built the church on Peter, but that is impossible.
 - a. The word for Peter is masculine and means "a piece of rock."
 - b. The word here for rock is feminine and means, "a mass of rock."
 - c. See 1Cor. 3:11
- B. It is married to Christ and wears His name.

1. He purchased it with His blood (Ac. 20:28).
2. It is His bride (2Cor. 11:2).
 - a. A beautiful analogy between husbands and wives and Christ and the church (Eph. 5:22-33).
3. The loving and submissive wife wants to wear her husband's name (Ac. 11:26; 26:28; 1Pet. 4:16).
4. Churches built by men wear men's names, and teach doctrines that men have devised for their creeds and disciplines.
5. Those who believe that they are married to Christ will only wear His name and worship as He commands to please Him.

III. IS YOUR DOCTRINE AND CREED FROM GOD OR FROM MEN?

- A. The NT is the teachings or law of Christ.
 1. Until His death on the cross, the Law of Moses was in effect for the Jews.
 - a. Col. 2:14-17 and Eph. 2:14-17 describe how He took the "middle wall of partition" that separated the Jews and Gentiles out the way in His flesh on the cross, making of the two one new man.
 - b. The old law had to be fulfilled for Christ to be our high priest and king (Heb. 7:12).
 - c. God said the old Law would be removed by a new law (Heb. 8:7-8).
 2. No longer is there forgiveness based on the sacrifice of the blood of animals, but the blood of Christ was shed for every man.
- B. Jesus warned frequently against man adding customs and traditions to the word of God.
 1. Jesus condemned the Jews for adding their customs and traditions to the Law of Moses (Mt. 15:3,9).
 2. The Lord has always warned man not to add to or take from His word (Deut. 4:2; Jo. 1:7; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18-19).

IV. IS THE IDEA THAT THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO HEAVEN, FROM GOD OR MEN?

- A. Jesus says that there are only two ways, and only one is to heaven (Mt. 7:13-14; Lk. 13:24).
- B. The way to heaven is so narrow and difficult that few will find it:
 1. It is as narrow as truth.
 2. It is as difficult as self-denial and dedication.
- C. The way to destruction is so broad that it includes all of the teachings of men and every false way.

V. IS THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION BY FAITH ONLY FROM GOD OR MEN?

- A. Many passages teach that faith is necessary for salvation. See Heb. 11:6; 10:39; Jas. 2:19; 2:24-26.
 1. Hebrews 11 describes saving faith as trusting God enough to do anything that God says.
- B. Many passages teach obedience to God, and list specific commands of things that must be obeyed.
- C. No one passage gives all of the conditions and requirements for salvation.
- D. If we TRUST God, we will realize that all that He commands is for our best interest and if we love Him, we will want to do what He says.

VI. IS YOUR RELIGIOUS CONFESSION FROM HEAVEN OR FROM MEN?

- A. We have several examples of "confessing Christ" in the NT.
 1. Demons and evil spirits knew who He was and would proclaim Him (Mt. 8:29; Mk. 3:11; Lk. 4:41). Their confessions were true.
 2. Jesus asked the apostles whom they thought he was, and Peter said (Mt. 16:16; Jn. 6:69).

3. Paul tells us to confess Jesus as Lord or Jesus is Lord (Rom. 10:9-10).
- B. There is no example or instruction to confess, "I believe that Christ has for God's sake pardoned my sins."
 1. Since this confession is not found in the NT, it must be from men.
 2. Bible confessions focus on our faith in who Christ is.

VII. IS YOUR BAPTISM FROM HEAVEN OR FROM MEN?

- A. Seven baptisms are mentioned in the NT, yet Paul told the Ephesians that "there is one baptism" (Eph. 4:5).
 1. The baptism of John was for JEWS before the church or kingdom was established to prepare God's people for the coming kingdom.
 2. The baptism of the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to teach by inspiration and perform miracles to confirm their teaching.
 - a. It also fell on the household of Cornelius to show the Jews that the Gentiles also were to receive the gospel.
 3. The baptism of fire is eternal punishment for those who refuse to obey the gospel.
 4. The baptism of the great commission was for the whole world that their sins might be forgiven, that they might become the children of God, and walk in newness of life.
- B. The word "baptism" is an anglicized Greek word that means to be immersed:
 1. In the NT, the word that is used most often to describe baptism is burial.
 2. The symbolism is given as representing the death of Christ (Rom. 6:3-4).
 3. Christ was buried after He died for our sins.
 4. We are buried in baptism when we become dead to the practice of sin in repentance and we are raised from the watery grave to walk in newness of life.
 - a. Some teach that one is saved and then baptized: that the new child of God is buried.
 - b. The man of sin is buried and a child of God is raised up.
 - c. Some claim that sprinkling or pouring is baptism but they are not burials in any sense.

VIII. IS THE IDEA OF MANY CHURCHES FROM HEAVEN OR FROM MEN?

- A. Jesus said, "I will build My church" (Mt. 16:18).
 1. The church is His body (Eph. 1:22,23; Col. 1:18). "There is one body..." (Eph. 4:4).
 2. He purchased it with his blood (Ac. 20:28).
 3. He is the Savior of the body (Eph. 5:23).
 4. It is His bride, and He only has one bride (2Cor. 11:2).
 5. Jesus prayed that all of His disciples be one as He and the Father are one (Jn. 17:20).
 6. Paul commanded that there be no divisions among us (1Cor. 1:10).
- B. Men sometimes thank God for division or denominations, but God is not responsible for them, and does not want them: Thank Satan for them.

IX. IS THE IDEA OF THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF APOSTASY FROM HEAVEN?

- A. The NT does not talk about the "possibility" of apostasy, but the reality of it (Jn. 15:6).
 1. Paul realized that even as an apostle, he could be lost (1Cor. 9:27).
 2. Those Xians who went back to the Law of Moses for doctrine fell from grace (Gal. 5:4).
 3. Judas, one of the apostles, fell because of sin (Jn. 17:12).
 4. Peter describes the false prophets and false teachers (2Pet. 2:1,15,20,21; 2Pet. 2:15).
- B. Many other examples could be given to show that the NT describes those who did fall from grace.

X. IS YOUR METHOD OF RAISING MONEY FROM HEAVEN OR MEN?

- A. In the NT, Xians are commanded to give voluntarily (1Cor. 16:2; 2Cor. 9:7).
- B. Therefore, their giving was to be:
 - 1. On the first day of the week
 - 2. According to our prospering, or proportionately
 - 3. As we purpose or plan in our heart
 - 4. Cheerfully and willingly.
- C. "Fund-raising" is simply man's substitute for individual generosity.

XI. IS YOUR FORM OF CHURCH ORGANIZATION FROM HEAVEN OR MEN?

- A. In the NT, the organization was congregational.
 - 1. A group of men, called elders, directed each congregation (Ac. 14:23).
 - 2. The work of these elders is described in terms applied to them.
 - a. "Elders" is the term used to refer to the seventy leaders of Israel.
 - b. Elders were to direct and oversee the congregation. Acts 20:28
 - c. "Overseers" is from the Greek, *episkopos*, and means superintendent or overseer. It is sometimes given as bishop.
 - d. "Shepherd" is translated by the Latin word pastor in the KJV (Eph. 4:11). It means to lead, to guide to food and water, and protect the flock.
 - 3. So, the group of elders in each congregation are to bishop and pastor the congregation.
 - 4. No one but Christ has authority over more than one congregation.
- B. The NT church also had deacons to serve under the elders.
 - 1. "Deacon" is a Greek word that means minister or servant.
 - 2. It is used for a group of men who serve the church under the elders.
 - 3. Their qualifications are given in 1Tim. 3:8-13.

XII. IS INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN CHURCH WORSHIP FROM HEAVEN OR MEN?

- A. There is not a single mention of instrumental music in the worship of the church in the NT.
 - 1. We are commanded to sing, and told the purpose of the singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).
 - 2. The Lord's purpose for our singing is:
 - a. Speaking to one another.
 - b. Teaching and admonishing one another.
 - 3. Men often focus on a different emphasis: to entertain or please.
- B. Our purpose with music is determined by whether we are trying to please men or God.
 - 1. We can't please both because they are the opposite to each other (Lk. 16:15; Gal. 1:10).

CONCLUSION.

- A. Let us be determined to please God rather than men.
- B. Let us deny ourselves and set our affections on things above where Christ reigns at the right hand of God.