

From Heaven Or From Men?

Joe Slater

Jesus respected the question of authority. On the morning after He drove the merchants and money changers out of the temple, the Sanhedrin demanded to know, “By what authority are you doing these things? Or who is he who gave You this authority?” (Luke 20:2). They viewed the temple as their own domain, and they certainly hadn’t given Jesus permission to teach there, much less to regulate what occurred on temple grounds. After all, He had not graduated from rabbinical school, so they viewed Him as a presumptuous intruder.

Jesus didn’t deny the need for authority, but neither did He accept their demand for human approval. In an absolutely brilliant maneuver, Jesus changed the focus to divine authority and the Sanhedrin’s total lack of fitness to judge His credentials. He asked a simple multiple-choice question: “The baptism of John – was it from heaven or from men?” (Luke 20:4).

The Sanhedrin certainly hadn’t approved John’s work. He had rebuked some of them, calling them a generation of vipers! (Matthew 3:7). The people, however, correctly counted John to be a prophet (thus having authority from God in heaven). Since the Sanhedrin feared the people, they refused to state their true convictions that John’s authority was from men, that is, he was acting on his own. Instead, they claimed not to know, thereby confessing themselves unfit to judge Jesus’ source of authority.

We should follow Jesus’ example of asking not for human authority, but for divine authority. Every teaching and practice should be put to the test: “Is this from heaven or from men?” Let us teach and do what God authorizes in His word while rejecting all that lacks divine sanction!

Meekness/Gentleness

“Blessed are the meek (gentle), for they shall inherit the land” (Matthew 5:5).

We all have some measure of passion and drive within us. Unbridled, it leads to many reckless decisions and behaviors that harm both ourselves and others. Discipline and self-control are hard to come by, yet we have learned the fruits of such focus, and the pain of the lack thereof. Paul used an illustration where a boxer who wants to win doesn't simply throw wild punches but concentrates them so as to win the contest (I Corinthians 9:26).

The word gentle (meek) comes from the Greek word “praus.” It was a word used by the Greeks to describe the taming of a wild animal. A colt was considered “gentle” when it was broken to the harness or bit. Useful, trained, and disciplined horses are much more valuable than wild ones. Useful, trained, and disciplined people are more valuable too. We have seen how many acts of nature can be harnessed to produce beneficial power: rushing rivers, wind, and solar.

Jesus wants to take our spirit and harness it to produce strength, direction, and usefulness. Jesus isn't just recognized as the lamb of God, but also as the lion out of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5). Lions are mentioned in the scriptures for their strength, boldness, ferocity, and stealth. The people saw this side of Jesus when He cleared out the temple. The scriptures predict that He will just be as ferocious when He returns.

The focused Israelites inherited the land of Canaan. A new heaven and new earth await the faithful (Revelation 21:1). Even in this life, the disciplined ones truly inherit the best of life.

--Roger Holm (Tijeras, NM)

I Can Sleep When The Wind Blows

A farmer lived in close proximity to the coast. Needing a hired hand, he advertised locally for a suitable worker. After a long time without applicants, an older man showed up and inquired about the job. The farmer expressed concern about the man’s age and ability. The man said, “I’m sure some may be better, but I will tell you this: I can sleep when the wind blows.” The farmer decided to hire him.

Not long after, a fierce tropical storm swept in. Panicking, the farmer found his worker sleeping. When the farmer tried to wake him, the man said, “I told you I can sleep when the wind blows.” He then went back to sleep. Furious, the farmer ran to see what needed to be done. He was stunned to find the livestock put away in the barns, the doors, gates, and windows closed and fastened, and the hay covered and secured with tarps. The farmer then remembered the man’s words.

Certainly, the unforeseen storm mirrors the conditions of everyday life. No man has the ability to forecast life’s sudden changes. I’m thankful for the eternal stability Lord Jesus provides. Mark 4:38 tells how Jesus slept at sea while the boat was being ravaged by a storm. Awakened by His frightened disciples, Jesus commanded the storm to cease. If the Lord has the power to command the wind and waves, He is more than able to bring peace to the lives of those who love Him.

--Kenny Westmoreland (Celina, TN)

Jesus is worth everything you are afraid of losing.

There is a problem when sin doesn't offend us but correction does. – J.J. Hendrix (via Facebook)

For Christians, a cemetery is a garden that has been planted and is waiting to bloom. – Wes McAdams