



Equipping Hour

The Authority of Scripture

Key Verse: John 12:48

“He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.”

Overview

The fundamental question regarding discussions about truth is, “What is your authority?” In 2004, John MacArthur was on the Larry King Live show. The topic was *Same-Sex Marriage Ban*. During the show MacArthur had a conversation with Gavin Newsom, who was the mayor of San Francisco at the time. Newsom declared that he was a practicing Catholic. MacArthur asked Newsom, “As a practicing Catholic, do you believe the Bible is the Word of God?” Newsom did not want to answer the question. MacArthur asked him again, “Do you believe the Bible is the authoritative Word of God?” Newsom responded, “Yeah, with respect, I guess I do.” Newsom then gave a snarky reply, “Now the response.” MacArthur went on to say, “Well then the Bible says when God created man, He said, ‘One man, one woman cleave together for life.’ That’s a family.”

What did John MacArthur do with Gavin Newsom? He established what the authority in the conversation was. He established that the Bible is the authority and, therefore, all men are called to obey its standards. The battleground for the truth has always begun with authority. Living in a postmodern world where people claim to have different “truths” means they also have different authority. For most unbelievers living with this postmodern mindset, they think they are their own authority.

One dictionary definition of authority is “power or right to enforce obedience; moral or legal supremacy; right to command or give a final decision.”¹ The word for authority in the Greek New Testament is *exousia*, and it means “a state of control over something; the right to control or command.”² From a secular worldview authority is inherited and then exercised by a powerful few, by the people, by those in a particular family, by evil men, or by one person. However, in a biblical worldview, original and ultimate authority was not inherited by God, but it resides with God and God alone. God did not need to receive His authority from anyone else as there was no one to bestow it on Him. God was not elected to practice His authority. He did not take it from someone else. God did not earn His authority. Authority has always been His and will always be His.

¹ *The New Shorter Oxford Dictionary*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), s.v. “authority.”

² Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed., based on the previous English editions by W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 352-353.

In the Garden of Eden, God's authority was challenged. Satan said to Eve, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" After the fall, mankind has continuously questioned God's authority. In his depravity, man will always rebel against God's Word as the truth and will question God's right to exercise authority over him. Instead of questioning God's authority, man would do better to submit to God's authority and obey His commands. Where does God reveal His authoritative commands to mankind? In His revealed Word. The Scriptures reveal to man that God is in authority and His commands are to be obeyed.

The Case for Scripture's Authority

1. 2 Chronicles 20:6. What did Jehoshaphat say about God? _____

2. 2 Timothy 3:16. Who is the ultimate author of the Bible? _____
3. Therefore, when the Bible speaks, it speaks with God's absolute and unqualified _____.

The Testimony of Scripture's Authority

1. Psalm 19:8. How does David identify God's Word? _____
2. Psalm 119:4. What does God command us to do with His Word? _____
3. 1 Corinthians 14:37. What does Paul say about his letter? _____
4. 2 Thessalonians 3:14. What does Paul require of his letter? _____

The Implications of Scripture's Authority

1. Mark 7:1–13. What did the Pharisees do with God's Word? _____

2. 1 Thessalonians 4:8. What is a rejection of God's Word equal to? _____
3. Luke 11:28. What comes from hearing and obeying God's Word? _____
4. John 14:21. How does God respond to those who keep His Word? _____
5. Joshua 1:7–8. What is the implication for those who obey God's Word? _____

Doctrinal Authority

1 Thessalonians 2:13. Man has a moral obligation to _____ what Scripture teaches.

- We are not free to believe whatever we want to believe.
- Many people affirm the inspiration and authority of Scripture but say things out of the other side of their mouth that goes contrary to this. It is because they want to believe whatever they want to believe.

Behavioral Authority

James 1:22. Man has a moral obligation to _____ what Scripture commands.

- Authority demands submission.

“To disbelieve or disobey any teaching of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God Himself!”
—Matt Waymeyer

Things that Challenge Scripture's Authority

- _____
- Personal _____
- Personal _____
- Personal _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- Opinions of _____
- A theological _____

“Since the origin of Scripture can ultimately be explained by divine inspiration, the authority of Scripture is directly derived from the authority of God. Those who do not acknowledge God’s authority in Scripture are condemned. On the other hand, those who rightfully honor and submit to God’s authority in Scripture are commended.”

—*Biblical Doctrine*, John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds.

Application

1. Why is the authority of Scripture so important for you as a believer?
2. Since God’s Word is the authority, how is your decision-making affected by it?
3. What are ways you can show unbelievers that you submit to God’s authority?