

"Authoritative"

When God gave us the Bible, did He speak with authority over our lives? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today, we're going to explore the authoritative nature of the Bible. Stay with us.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We look to God, our Creator, for life and for every blessing. James 1:17 says, that "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." We owe God our love, our respect, our obedience for all that He's done for us. And that's why we must take the Bible seriously. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

From the beginning of our lives, we're accountable for our actions. Children are accountable to their parents, students to their teachers, and citizens to the civil authority. When we broke the rules, well we faced the consequences whether we liked it or not. Human nature seems to have this rebellious streak that doesn't like rules or laws. We don't want anyone telling us what to do. And all of history tells of man's relentless rebellion to authority. From the beginning people have craved their own way and set aside the will of God. We all struggle the war between our desires and our duties, between right and wrong.

The Bible provides God's written commandments. In words that were passed down through the centuries we find His spiritual and moral laws. God spoke with authority when they were written, and they still have God's authority behind them today. What God said, He said to all people in all places for all time. Now time cannot change them; our culture can ignore them but they cannot erase them. People can rebel and refuse to hear God's commandments, but God will have the last say in the matter. You see, God is still God, still Creator, and still Judge.

Now if you want to study more about the Bible, we offer this booklet, entitled, "Give Me the Bible," free of charge. If you'd like a copy or a CD of our study today, or this booklet, and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, and we'll read from Matthew 7, and then we'll explore the authority of the Bible.

Our reading today comes from the words of the Lord Jesus at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 7, 24 – 27, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall." Jesus spoke these words to be heard. Let's pray together. Father. We're grateful that You have loved us and blessed us in so many ways. And Father we pray that we may give you our love and our devotion and our obedience. And may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

God is the authority! He has all authority and is the ultimate authority above all others. When God speaks, no one can overrule Him. Without His consent no one has any authority. He has all authority

because He is our Maker, our Creator. He gave us life and provides every blessing that we enjoy. As our Maker He has every right to have complete control over our lives and our souls.

God gave all authority to Jesus Christ. John 3:35 says, that "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand." The authority of Jesus cannot be removed, edited, or annulled. No one can overrule the Lord Jesus. He is our Creator; He is "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Revelation 19 verse 16). In Matthew 28 and verse 18 Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Paul said in Ephesians 1 verses 20 to 23 that God "raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." Jesus is the only head of His church, and there can be no other.

Now people can ignore and rebel against the Lord Jesus in the present, but the time will come when no one can ignore Jesus. Philippians 2 verses 9 to 11 says, "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Now regardless of what we think today, one day we will face the Lord Jesus, and that will be on Judgment Day. 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 10 says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due him for what he's done in the body, whether good or evil." Now you cannot escape this appointment, you can't delay it, no matter who you are. Those who are right with God will long for the judgment, and those who are not right with God will dread it.

The Lord Jesus on Judgment Day will judge us all by His teaching. You remember He said in John 12 and verse 48, that "The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken (Jesus says) will judge him on the last day." Now there is a last day, a day of reckoning and judgment, on which the Lord, the righteous judge, will bless the righteous, but He'll condemn the unrighteous. Hebrews 4 verses 12 to 13 says, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and the intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

Now as we've said, on the last day the Lord will judge us by His words (according to John 12 and verse 48). Now according to Matthew 23 and verse 34 Jesus sent forth prophets, wise men, and scribes with His message, with His words. The scribes were there to write down the teaching of Jesus that it might be preserved for all time. Now at the great white throne, as we mentioned on Judgment Day, the Lord will consult what the Holy Spirit moved men to write in the Scriptures. We will be judged by what is written in God's books. Revelation 20 and verse 12 says, "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. And then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done." Now what the Lord said in the first century, His words, will judge us on the last day. And God will have the last word on every spiritual and moral matter. Now only God will decide what is right and wrong. And He will judge us by His written words, found in the books.

We won't be judged by what people think, by oral traditions of the early church fathers, by opinion polls, by the councils or the ancient creeds of men, or by some man-made document. The last and final words that judges our souls and decides our eternal destiny are the same words that Jesus spoke in the

first century. We will be judged by the words of Jesus found in the New Testament, that the scribes wrote down. For this reason we need to know what the Bible says, don't we?

Wouldn't it be sad to face judgment and not know what God said, or not know about the grace of God? Wouldn't it be sad to face judgment and never know the gospel of Christ could have saved us and given us eternal life? The Lord Jesus said in Luke 9 verses 25 to 26, "For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and he loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels." If the Lord Jesus has the final say about your soul and your destiny, shouldn't your focus and your attention be on Him? If His words are going to judge you on the last day, what advantage would you have by being ashamed of what He taught?

Some think challenging the authority of God in large matters is rebellious, but we shouldn't fear to challenge the Lord in smaller things. The Lord Jesus, however, wants us to "observe all that I have commanded you" (and that's what He said in Matthew 28 and verse 20). James argued, "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For he who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not murder.' Now if you do not commit adultery but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty" (James 2 verses 10 to 12). We can't pick and choose which commandments of God matter and which don't. We're not judges of God's commandments; God's commandments are judges of us!

Martin Luther understood this and he recognized that every commandment of God mattered. He said, "Well if I profess with the loudest voice and the clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I'm not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing him. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point."

Some think the Bible is too old or too strict or needs changing. Some politicians think Christians ought to change our religion to permit their political agendas. But there is no changing of the Bible. What it said when it was written is what it will say on the last day! The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 24 and verse 35, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." It's foolish to think that we can edit out God's moral law or rewrite His doctrine. There is but one gospel, and Paul said in Galatians 1 verses 8 to 9, "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one that we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one that you received, let him be accursed." God will not permit anyone to change what He's taught; and our task is to abide in the words Jesus spoke.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7 verses 21 to 23, that "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' (And Jesus then says), then I'll declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, (depart from Me) you who practice lawlessness.'" It's not talking religious or doing religious things that make us right with God. A true Christian is one that hears and does the will of the Father who is in heaven.

Now, the many people who said, "Lord, Lord," truly thought they were right with God. When He rejected them, they argued with Him. They thought they were acting in His name. And you can imagine

how shocked they were to find out that they were rejected and lost. These were religious people who talked and acted like good, religious people; but Jesus refused to let them enter heaven, because they did not follow God's teaching. They were lawless and ignored what God taught. They did what they wanted and taught what they liked. They followed what they thought was popular; but these folks didn't do the will of God. They were never right with God to begin with. They were religious but not righteous! They were spiritual but not obedient. Lawless people are not interested in pleasing the Lord by keeping His commandments; they're interested in their own ways.

What about you, my friend? How do you measure up with the written word of God? Now even if you think you're better than somebody else, how do you measure up with the Scriptures, with the authentic, true genuine teaching of Jesus? We might justify ourselves, but will God justify us? Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4 verses 4 to 5, "For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It's the Lord who judges me. And therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. And then each one will receive his commendation from God." The Pharisees thought they were righteous but stood condemned. They added many oral traditions to the Law of God. And when people change the gospel or any of God's instructions to the church, they too will find themselves at odds with God. They may think they're right with God but find that they're really in spiritual jeopardy.

Now why does all this matter? Well it's simple and clear: when people challenge God by disobeying His commandments, they condemn themselves. When they obey God, they enjoy His promises. God told a rebellious Israel in Isaiah 1 verses 18 to 20, "Come now, let's reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. And if you're willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." Now this principle, from Isaiah's words is still true. You cannot live in rebellion to God and expect God to bless you eternally. You cannot ignore or rewrite His words to suit yourself and imagine that God approves of it. God's word is settled in heaven; it's God's final authority and cannot be broken or undone. Isn't it better to obey the Lord than to presume that you can do what you want and everything's okay? Oh my friend, obey the Lord. Let's pray together. Father, we're grateful for Your love and we're thankful for this day.

That You have given us Your word so that we might know Your will for our lives. Oh Father, help us to love You and to be obedient to Your word. And may Your will be done on earth as it is heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

God is the Creator, and we are the created. Occasionally people contradict God's word and say, "I don't believe ... (then they'll mention some sinful behavior)... I don't believe that's wrong." Well they're expressing their judgment. But in matters spiritual and moral, people's feelings aren't the final authority. We will be judged by what God has written in His books. What God has said matters. And so we ask, what say the Scriptures? Galatians 6 verses 7 to 8 says, "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." My friend, you are indeed accountable for your actions, your words, your thoughts, and your choices. God will have the last say and really the only say about matters of right and wrong.

Now if you love God, you want to keep His commandments. You want to please Him. And you'll pay attention to God's words so you know the truth. You would rather follow God's truth, even if it's

difficult and unpopular, and go to heaven than to join the world in sin and lose your soul. It's better to search out God's will from the Scriptures than presume what somebody thinks is so. Respecting God means being careful and diligent to obey His words.

Now to become a Christian, put your faith in Jesus Christ, repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ. Now what Peter told the people at Pentecost is what we need to obey. He said in Acts 2:38, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Why not do what God says today to become a Christian. Don't assume that you're saved, be sure of it by hearing what the Scripture says. My friend, get right with God!

We hope that today's study has stirred you to respect what God says. This month we're offering a free booklet, Give Me the Bible. Now if you live in the United States and you want a free copy or a CD of this message, then mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map that has the location of churches, perhaps one in your area. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now if you call or write us don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We won't exploit you. We're not here to hurt you, but to help you get to heaven.

We do ask that you please get involved with a church of Christ. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So we ask that you keep searching God's Word with us, we ask that you tell a friend about this program. I know that many of your friends will be glad to be able to hear a word of God, something that comes directly from the Bible, and doesn't exploit them. Well God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.