

"From God or Men?"

Jesus once asked the question whether John's baptism was from God or men. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study, "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're asking the same question, "from God or men?" Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. God's word in Scripture can help us distinguish right and wrong, what comes from God and what comes from the minds of men. We must understand God and mankind are not equals. God sees and knows a multitude of things that we will never know. We need His wisdom. Ah, thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

I am grateful to God for you, our viewers. For the last nine years, you've watched or listened to this program and encouraged me. And I'm deeply grateful for your prayers. I am especially grateful to my coworkers and volunteers at SEARCH who work tirelessly for the cause of Christ. We pray to our Father for open doors for the Word so that in this coming year we can reach many who are searching for the truth and bless many who follow it!

The source of an idea does matter, because truth matters. Whether our beliefs come from God or from the imagination of men determines their validity. God tells us the truth, but the devil has told many lies to distract and lead us astray. Men may think they know and yet still be deceived. Many people, sadly, deceive themselves with what they want to believe rather than what they ought to believe. God reveals what we need rather than what we want. His word reveals that He truly is rather than what some imagine Him to be. That is we know what He's really like. One of the reasons that we search the Scriptures is to find the truth that comes from God. We're determined to follow the Lord's way; we want nothing less and nothing more. The Lord Jesus has the words of eternal life. And He is the source of every good thing. We want the Lord.

We offer this study on "From God or Men" free. And if you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and 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, we'll read from Matthew 21:23 to 27, and will explore whether our faith is from God or from men.

Our reading today comes from the life of Jesus in the gospel according to Matthew chapter 21 verses 23 to 27.

When He entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him while He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?" Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John was from what *source*, from heaven or from men?" And they *began* reasoning among themselves, saying, "(Well) If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Then why did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the people; for they all regard John as a prophet." And answering Jesus, they said, "We do not know." He also said to them, "(Well) Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

Jesus knew how to answer the weaknesses of men. And He knows how to answer ours. Let's pray together. Oh Father we're grateful for the life of Jesus Christ and His wisdom. And Father we pray that

You will help us always to follow Him and to do Your will always on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The difference between God and man are enormous. God is omniscient; that means He knows everything. But men don't know everything and have assumed much. God has lived throughout all eternity, but man has only existed a short time. God wisely created the world and watched human history from the beginning. And He knows everything about everything, and nothing escapes His notice. Well if we ignore what God told us in the Bible, then we're left with myths, and legends, assumptions, and opinions. People use the word "scholar" or "science" and assume that their reasoning, dating, and theories must be correct, only to find that some scholar or scientist changes our minds just a few years later.

God is not like man. He doesn't tease or tempt us with a fabrication. Numbers 23 verse 19 says that, "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent." Isaiah 65:16 calls Him "the God of truth," and 2 Timothy 2 and verse 15 calls Scripture "the word of truth." Yes, God declares in Malachi 3 and verse 6, "I am the Lord, I do not change."

God doesn't think the way men think. People trust their judgment and often find their judgments are faulty. Proverbs 14 and verse 12 says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." He may think he is doing the right thing when, in fact, he is opposing what is right and good. Do you recall the Lord's prediction and Peter's response? Found in Matthew 16. Verses 21 to 23 says, "From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised on the third day. Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." But He (that is Jesus) turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." Now though Peter was zealous and loved the Lord, he was actually opposing, in that statement, the will of God.

Now it's easy to pursue our lives and miss God's truth. Jeremiah saw it in his day, and it's true today! Jeremiah 10:23 says, "I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself, Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps." God's thoughts and judgments, however, are true and they're dependable. God said in Isaiah 55 verses 8 and 9, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Man by his own wisdom will never fully know the Lord. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:21, "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe."

Now many people assume that their feelings, the feelings of their hearts are truer than anything else, but the heart can lead us into great trouble. Jeremiah 17 verses 9 to 10 says that, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds." People frequently lie to themselves and they convince themselves that what they want is what is right. The song may say, well "It can't be wrong when it feels so right"; but God may not think that way.

Some are so ingrained in their man-made traditions, that they assume that these traditions came from God. The Pharisees believed their human traditions even more than they did the written word of God. They thought following their traditions meant that they were devoted to God, but their human traditions found fault with Jesus, when His followers didn't wash their hands according to the tradition. You remember the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 15 verses 8 and 9, speaking of the Pharisees, that "This

people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me. 'But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'" He clearly predicted in verse 13, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up."

Now some think if the majority believes it, then millions of people can't be wrong! But God said in Exodus 23 and verse 2 that, "You shall not follow the masses in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert justice." My friend the crowd is not always right. Remember Noah against the whole world. Noah was right but the world was not. Remember Joshua and Caleb, the two spies that came back and said that they should take the land. And then there were the opposing ten cowardly spies and all the weeping Israelites in Numbers 13. Well Joshua and Caleb stood with God with the Lord and they did not follow the crowds. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7 verses 13 to 14, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it." Now the crowds may think that they're doing well and yet be going the wrong way. And this is why we must ask, what does the Lord will from us?

Some feel they must please people, so they forget pleasing the Lord. Paul, you remember, asked in Galatians 1 and verse 10, "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ." Sadly, many of the Jews chose not to follow Christ, because they wanted to please their friends. John 12:42 to 43 says, "Nevertheless (even) many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God." You see they would rather keep their status among the Jews than to enjoy the approval of God. How sad! How mistaken!

Zeal for God is important, but not if that zeal arises from misunderstanding. Sincere zeal does not replace God's teaching in the word of God. The Jews were zealous for their faith but they rejected their Messiah, Jesus Christ. Paul said in Romans 10 verses 2 to 3, "For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness." Convictions and zeal in the wrong things will lead you, will not lead you to righteousness, the righteousness of God. You must come to Jesus for that.

Some folks think following their conscience will lead them to do the right thing, but your conscience may be trained in the ways of the world rather than in the teaching of God. You remember the apostle Paul, as we talked about, said in Acts 23 verse 1, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day." Well, even when Paul was Saul of Tarsus the persecutor of the church, he thought he was following his conscience! And he said in Acts 22:4 to 5, he said "I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders (they) can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished." Oh, one can conscientiously oppose God and His ways and think he's doing the right thing.

Some people follow whatever their family believes, never evaluating whether the family is following the truth. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 10:37, that "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me."

You may love your family, I know I do, but you cannot put them first and still serve the Lord. Though your mother and father were wonderful people, they do not compare with Jesus. Put Jesus first.

Just because someone claims to be a prophet doesn't mean he is God's prophet. There were people who claimed in Jeremiah's day that they had a dream or "the Lord said this or that, but the Lord never spoke through them. They just dreamed it up in their own imagination. Jeremiah 23:16 to 18 says, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; They speak a vision of their own imagination, Not from the mouth of the LORD. They keep saying to those who despise Me, 'The LORD has said, "You will have peace"; And as for everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart, They say, 'Calamity will not come upon you.' "But who has stood in the council of the LORD, That he should see and hear His word? Who has given heed to His word and listened?" You see they were dreaming up prophecies rather than really listening to God's true prophets. We have people who claim to be prophets today who dream up calamities and ideas from their own imagination. 1 John 4 verse 1 says, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." We must test everything by the Scriptures. False teachers will always go astray from God's word.

Some people trust the doctrines of men. 2 John 9 to 11 speaks of a false belief about Jesus that people held in the early church. They did not believe that Christ came in the flesh. Well, John spoke plainly, "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds." People who hold false doctrines about Christ have no place with God the Father.

What is true of the teaching about Christ thought, is also true of other matters. You cannot teach a corrupt gospel and not be accursed according to Galatians 1:8 to 9; you cannot teach a divisive and unscriptural doctrine and stay in fellowship with God according to Romans 16 and verse 17. You cannot teach some man-made creed and expect to please God. When you stop believing what Christ teaches or start substituting your own thinking for the Bible, you stop believing in Christ himself. If you support someone who teaches a false doctrine, you are participating, my friend, in his "evil deeds." Yes, false teaching is an "evil deed," because it leads people to believe a lie. False teaching is cruel, because believing a human fabrication leaves little room for belief in God.

We need the gospel truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. You cannot hold fast to one passage of Scripture and then ignore the others. For instance, that we need faith to be saved is clearly taught in Scripture; but to say faith alone saves ignores the need for love, for repentance, and for obedience, which are also necessary to salvation. Paul said in Acts 20 and verse 27, "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God." Many today think they can pick and choose what they like and ignore what they dislike. Don't be deceived. We must die to ourselves and to our ways, so that we can live for Christ and His ways. We must lovingly hear His voice and take up our crosses daily to follow Him. The Lord Jesus said "Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." John 18 and verse 37. Let's be in the truth. Let's pray together. Father help us always to love You from our hearts and to server You and to do Your will on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Ultimately, all spiritual authority resides in Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 28:18, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." Jesus speaks with final authority. Now no human council can overrule or edit what He says. They cannot vote Him out or stand in His place. No

one has more authority or power than the Lord Jesus. Jesus has spoken in His written word, and what He says will stand. And it'll stand true to the very end of time. Jesus said in Matthew 24 and verse 35 that, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away."

Do you believe in Jesus? Many trust their opinions and experiences above all else, even the revealed will of God in the Bible. They believe if it works, then it must be all right. And they forget that what pleases people may not please the Lord. In the end, we are all accountable to Him. Now our judgment is often faulty, and our experiences too few to be without flaw; but God's Word is flawless and true. And that's why we must listen to God's word.

To become a Christian place your trust in the Lord Jesus and in what He teaches. The gospel of Christ has God's power to save. And if Jesus died for your sins, and God raised Him from the dead, you have the hope of salvation. Turn from your sins in repentance and humble your heart before God. Confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Now when you're baptized, God will wash away your sins and make you His child. When you're baptized God will give you newness of life and add you to His church. Don't let anything, anything keep you from giving yourself to Christ Jesus. Once you become a Christian, stay faithful as long as you live. Make your commitment for life. Since Jesus died for you, why not live for Him and serve Him faithfully to the very end.

Well we hope that you've been blessed by today's study about the truth that the Bible came from God. Now if you live in the United States and want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, 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 lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. You can also watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Please subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. And we also offer a free Bible Correspondence course. Now don't worry, if you get a hold of us, we won't exploit you or put you on a list.

Please get involved with a church of Christ. 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 keep searching God's Word with us. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.