

THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

Studies in the Sermon on the Mount

Part LCVII

“The Authority of Jesus”

I. Introduction

A. The Nature of Authority

1. Some of the greatest questions in our lives revolve around the issue of “authority”; but what is it?

“Authority”

The power or right to give orders or enforce obedience.

Oxford Dictionary

2. Instinctively, we human beings want to know...

- Who’s in charge here?
- Who said so?
- Who has the final say in this

3. God has created the universe in such a way that each one of us is forced to face up to the question, “Who has the right to tell me what to do?” Or, “Who has the power to punish me if I disobey?”

4. The problem with authority is that our human nature doesn’t like it!

- “I know the sign says 35 mph, but I’m in a hurry!”
- ”No one’s going to tell me what to do!”
- “I don’t care what the Bible says, this is what I believe...”

“Nothing more marks the fallen nature of man more than its hatred of authority!”

R.A.Torrey

5. This is why any confrontation with Jesus Christ will always create a conflict with the sinful nature over the question of authority!

6. Nowhere is this more evident than what happened when Jesus finished preaching the Sermon on the Mount.

II. The Authority of Jesus

A. The Effect of the Sermon

1. We have now completed our verse-by-verse study of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, the greatest sermon ever preached by the greatest preacher that ever lived.

2. The words of the Sermon end with V.27. But we cannot leave our study without looking at the last 2 verses of Chapter 7, where the Holy Spirit inspired St. Matthew to record the *effect* that the sermon had upon the hearers...

And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Matthew 7:28-29 KJV

When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

Matthew 7:28-29 NIV

3. Don't miss this! The people who actually *heard* this sermon were "astonished", (Gk. word means amazed, astounded, overwhelmed) at the teaching because of how the Teacher *delivered* the teaching; He literally "knocked them flat" because He spoke "as one having authority"!

"With all other teachers that the world has ever known, the important thing is the teaching; but here is a case in which the Teacher is even more important than what He taught."

The Fundamentals, R.A. Torrey

4. The people on the Mountain quickly realized that Jesus was not speaking like a scribe, or a Pharisee, or a Rabbi...He was speaking as if He was GOD!

- Their previous teachers taught them to keep the commandments to get God’s blessing; but Jesus began the Sermon with calling the people blessed!
- He refers to the Old Testament when He says, “Do not think that I am come to do away with it but to fulfill it”; meaning that no one had ever kept all the commandments and lived a sinless life...UNTIL NOW!
- Six times in Chapter 5 He referred to God’s law and what others were saying about it, then said, 6 times, “But I say unto you...”; putting Himself in the place of God!

**Jesus claimed to be absolute Lord in the whole region of morals. He settled the meaning and force of old laws, and instituted new ones by His own authority...
The Fundamentals**

- He taught them to pray to God as “OUR Father”; that His Father was God and theirs as well!
- At the end of the Sermon, He speaks of Judgment Day, when many will call Him Lord but that He will reject them!

a. Alfred Edersheim was an Austrian Jew who converted to Christianity and in 1883 wrote a classic book, “The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah”. He comments...

“What most filled them with wonderment and awe was that He Who taught also claimed to be the God-the final Judge of all, and that their fate would be decided not merely by professed discipleship, but by their real relation to Him.”

Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah

b. We have spent a whole year studying Jesus’ great teaching; but have we failed to notice the greatness of the Teacher?

“The One who sat there on the Mount to teach, is the One who at the end will sit on the throne of His glory and all the nations of the world shall appear before Him, and He will pronounce the judgment upon them. Was anything more astounding, more astonishing, ever uttered in this world?”

The Fundamentals

5. We have spent a year studying this Sermon on the Mount, verse by verse. The question is, are we amazed? Astonished? Astounded? Some are not.

"Many people are not astonished by this Sermon. God forbid that that should be true of any of us. But it is not enough that we should merely be astonished; our reaction must go beyond astonishment..."

"Surely our reaction as He speaks to us should be to recognize that this is none other than the Son of God Himself who has been speaking to us in the words we have considered; the very incarnate Son of God."

The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth

B. What Effect Has Our Teaching Had on YOU?

1. The acid test of whether we really heard the Sermon or not is whether or not we receive Jesus as "one having authority"!

2. This goes way beyond whether we receive Him as Savior; or healer; or Prophet; but whether we receive Him as the final authority, as GOD!

3. It is amazing to me how many people, even Church people, treat the Lord Jesus Christ as nothing more than a wise teacher. C.S. Lewis, in his book "Mere Christianity" proves this cannot be true!

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say..."

C.S. Lewis

"A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg - or else he would be the Devil of Hell."

Lewis concludes...

"You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His

being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

4. I am concerned about the kind of Christianity that fails to confront the culture with the claims of Christ as *God*, as the One *having final authority* over the lives and the souls of men.

5. We are not the first generation that has watered down the Person of Jesus.

a. In 1941, Dorothy Sayers, wonderful Christian author and a friend of the great C.S. Lewis, said this in her book, "Letters to a Diminished Church"...

"It's been left for our later generations to muffle up the shattering personality of Jesus. We have efficiently clipped the claws of the Lion of Judah, certified Him as 'meek and mild', and recommended Him as a household pet for pale pastors and pious old ladies."

Dorothy Sayers

b. What will become of the Gospel if we fail to present the claims of Christ for fear of offending people?

"If all men are offended by Christ, let them be offended; but where is the sense of being offended at something that is not Christ and is nothing like Him. We do (Jesus) little honor by watering down His personality until it wouldn't offend a fly. Surely it is not the business of men to adapt Christ to men, but to adapt men to Christ."

Dorothy Sayers, "Letters to a Diminished Church"

6. God in Christ confronts men in such a way that forces a decision!

"It is impossible to entertain an opinion of indifference regarding Jesus. If one considers Him at all, he must worship Christ or crucify Him. Where there is earnestness in the inquiry that earnestness ends in homage or in crucifixion."

Joseph Parker, 1830-1902

7. Testimony: God has put a passion into my soul to see the Lordship of Christ and His absolute authority over us restored to the Church. My soul is sick to see so many who say "Lord, Lord", but do not obey Him as one having authority.

8. A few months ago, I was reading the life story of A.W. Tozer, a man whose books have been such a blessing to me since I was saved in the early 70's.

III. Conclusion

A. Meet A.W. Tozer

1. One of the greatest voices of the 20th century church in America was A.W. Tozer, (1897-1963). I recommend all his books!

2. Tozer spent the last 44 years of his life in Christian ministry as a Pastor and author, writing over a dozen books and dozens of booklets and pamphlets. His wonderful writings are still widely read today. But at the end of his life, he wrote a book that his biographer James L. Snyder called "his valedictory" because "it expressed the concern of his heart."

3. This last message was published 3 days after his death; and what was its title? "The Waning Authority of Christ in the Churches"! Here are his last written words..."

"Jesus Christ today has almost no authority at all among the groups that call themselves by his name."

A.W. Tozer

a. He wrote these words in 1963, one year after I graduated High School...

"In the gospel churches today, Christ is in fact little more than a beloved symbol ... The Lordship of Jesus is not quite forgotten, but it has been mostly relegated to the hymnal where all responsibility toward it may be discharged in a glow of pleasant religious emotion."

A.W. Tozer

4. This is what happens when we fail to see Jesus as more than a just a "good man".

a. Christmas is a time where we think of the incarnation; God becomes Man; but we must never forget that the Man was God!

“It used to be that people had a problem seeing the human in Jesus. Now it seems that more people have trouble seeing the Divine in Christ. To faithfully represent Christ in our times requires re-presenting Him.”

Dr. Leonard Sweet, “Christ Manifesto”

5. There was a time when no one could think of God as a man; the incarnation fixed that. But today we need to re-present the Man as God!

6. American Christianity needs a dose of Lordship:

a. We preachers need to lift up and exalt the Lordship of Christ and re-present Him as “one having authority”.

b. We need not worry about church growth if we do what He said!

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.

John 12:32

c. We don’t need to try to draw people to the church with gimmicks and rodeos; Jesus, Jesus Himself, IS the “draw”!

7. Jesus is the Savior; but He is also LORD.

“What is needed in this hour is a clear, compelling and uncompromised declaration that Jesus is more than a spiritual guide, more than a sacrificial leader, more than one of many ‘ways’ to God. But He is indeed, the Supreme Ruler of All Creation and He is Lord of All.”

Dr. Mark Chironna

B. One Solitary Life

1. As we leave the Sermon on the Mount, I pray we stand in amazement at the authority of the One who taught it.

a. I pray that we never offer Christ to the world as a Savior without, at the same time, requiring their obedience to Him as LORD. In the words of Cornelius Van Til, one of the great theologians of the last century...

“It is only if we demand of men complete submission to the living Christ of the Scriptures in every area of their lives, that we have presented the claims of the Lord Christ without compromise.”

Cornelius Van Til

2. I pray that we enter the New Year with a fresh renewal of our love for Jesus; Him who is the King and who has the final authority.

3. A generation ago, Dr. James Allan Francis, a Baptist Pastor, wrote a short essay meditating on the greatness of the Man Jesus Christ. Let’s watch this as we prepare for communion....

VIDEO

One Solitary Life

Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village. He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty. Then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never owned a home. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put His foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself...

While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon a cross between two thieves. While He was dying His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth – His coat. When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Nineteen long centuries have come and gone, and today He is a centerpiece of the human race and leader of the column of progress.

I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that were ever built; all the parliaments that ever sat and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life.

Dr. James Allan Francis, “*The Real Jesus and Other Sermons*”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ly2s0ZbcN6w>

Let me close with something from H.G. Wells; the brilliant writer of such books as “The Invisible Man”, “The Time Machine” and the War of the Worlds”...

“I am a historian. I am not a believer, but I must confess as a historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the centerpiece of history. Jesus Christ is the most dominant figure in all history.”

H.G. Wells

May we who do believe never cease to be amazed by the Lord Jesus Christ, He who speaks “as one having authority”!

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