

## The Authority of the Scriptures: Lesson 8

# The Word of God and Its Rivals

...He who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?" says the LORD. Is not My word like a fire?" says the LORD, "And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" (Jer.23:28-29)

I. Based on all that we have studied thus far, we may justly conclude that:

- A. God, as Creator, possesses absolute authority over His creatures;
- B. The Bible is the authentic revelation of God's will and purpose; thus
- C. The Bible should be given full authority over our lives, and serves as a final court of appeals in all matters of faith and practice (2 Tim.3:16-17/Isaiah 8:20/1 Thess.5:21)

II. It follows that no other authority can rightly supersede or pre-empt that of the Scriptures in the decision-making process of the Christian. Yet Christians routinely, by ingrained habit and unexamined conditioning, live and make decisions contrary to the actual teaching of Scripture. Since all thinking and behavior reflects submission to some authority, we must conclude that there are other "authorities" that continue to exert influence over our lives in conflict with the Scriptures. Any such "authorities" must be recognized as the usurpers of God's rightful place in our lives, and as strongholds of the enemy that must be "cast down" along with "every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God." (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

III. Submission to Scripture in all things will result in right opinions and right actions. Any imperfection of our present opinions and actions must be traced to our submission to some faulty "authority" other than Scripture. This must be recognized as the sin that it surely is, and repented of, since the placing of any authority above God is the detestable sin of idolatry.

IV. Principal rivals to the Word of God as determiners of our decisions, thoughts and actions:

### A. Human "Authorities"

A man of distinction ceases to speak authoritatively exactly at the moment that he speaks in conflict with the Word of God. His rank among men (even in the church) carries no weight in itself (Gal.2:14/Acts 17:11/Acts 8:20/Isa.2:22)

#### 1. Cultic:

- a. Scholarly experts
- b. Celebrity spokesmen
- c. Christian authors, pastors, media personalities

2. Governmental authority (e.g. licensing marriage & divorce, military involvement, "lifestyle" discrimination, establishment of educational norms for children, etc)

### B. Human Traditions

Traditions are beliefs or practices whose validity rests upon their antiquity. Honoring tradition has been defined as "giving our ancestors a vote," but though all the people who have lived throughout history should vote against God, His Word remains unchangeable true, and mankind in error. (Mark 7:7-10/Prov.30:5-6/1 Peter 1:18/Col.2:8)

- 1. Roman Catholicism
- 2. Family customs
- 3. Legalistic rules
- 4. Cultural

### C. Human Reasoning

It is the height of arrogance to think that what God has said can be challenged by the puny reasoning powers of the human mind. (Prov.3:5/Psalm 131:1/Isa.55:9/Matt.22:29)

1. Jehovah's Witnesses and the Trinity
2. Theological
3. Rationalization of sin
4. Reckless faith

#### D. *Personal Experience*

Experiences are perceived by the senses, all of which can be deluded and may mistake spiritual counterfeits for the real thing. "Christian pragmatism" is the placing of approval on a belief or practice because "experience has proved" that it yields desirable results. Experience cannot yield information about the moral rightness or wrongness of an action, since those who stubbornly persist in doing what pleases God often appear to be colossal failures in the eyes of the world. (Deut.13:1-4)

1. The Mormon's "burning bosom"
2. Self-validating sensational phenomena
3. Dreams, visions, impressions, personal revelations
4. Practical morality: "The end justifies the means,"
5. Spiritual "therapies" that get "results"
6. "I tried Christianity, but it didn't work for me."

#### E. *Sentiment*

Sentiment is an opinion based upon what one feels to be right, but not necessarily on the basis of reason. Certain things just unexplainably "seem right." But the heart is often deceitful (Jer.17:9) and the way that seems right often leads to death (Prov.14:12/16:25).

1. "It can't be wrong when it feels so right."
  - a. "Everyone's entitled to a little happiness"
  - b. The government ought to "do something" about...
  - c. "But they *love* each other!"
  - d. "Boys will be boys"
  - e. Who are we to judge?
2. The God who is nice
  - a. Problems with biblical wars of annihilation
  - b. Problems with hell
  - c. God wouldn't want His children sick (or poor, or in unhappy marriages...)
3. Jesus wouldn't hurt a flea
  - a. Discipline of children
  - b. Church discipline

#### F. "Flying by instruments"