



Jeff Sweeten

Back to the Bible
is presented by the

Park Heights Church of Christ

1300 E. Boynton St.
Hamilton
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Schedule of Services

SUNDAY

9:30 a.m. Bible Class
10:25 a.m. Morning Worship
1:30 p.m. Afternoon Worship

WEDNESDAY

7:00 p.m. Bible Study

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Back to the Bible

AUTHORITY

By Jeff Sweeten

The term “authority” has lost a great deal of its dignity and most of its power in today’s culture. It once garnered respect, reverence, even godly fear, but not anymore. It is a term more often equated with abuse and corruption, and little wonder when the media portrays only the ugly side of authority’s enforcement. That is not to say that anyone is opposed to accountability but the standard to which law enforcement is held often exceeds human capacity and, sometimes, common sense. On the other side of the coin, few would advocate total anarchy; a “might- makes-right” mentality seems a bit Neanderthal.

So, it is not a surprise when you ask someone about their religious beliefs that the responses vary almost as diversely as the people who give them. It is as if the authority for religious faith for many, sincere God-seekers is whatever makes them feel good (and our culture strongly promotes that one should practice whatever makes one feel good), hence the religious division and the cacophony of voices contributing to the din of spiritual confusion. This is an odd response to a principle stated by the inspired Apostle Paul: “For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (1 Corinthians 14:40).

If God is not the author of confusion, who is?

In order to be right with God, one must submit to His authority. Doing whatever is right in one’s own eyes did not work out so well in Israelite history (ref. the book of Judges); it will work out no better for those seeking to be God’s children today. If one is not willing to submit to God’s authority where a religious practice or service is involved, one can “authorize,” literally, anything.

Nine times, during the Ten Plagues, Moses began his message to the Pharaoh of Egypt with a “Thus saith the Lord...” (Exodus 4:22; 5:1; 7:17; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3; 11:4). With each rejection, Pharaoh and the Egyptians suffered. If one is to speak with any religious authority, leaving out a “thus-saith-the-Lord” relegates the message to a human opinion, wholly void of any power, relevance or benefit. It is foolhardy to found one’s faith on some person’s opinion since no person has spiritual authority beyond God. If one makes a religious claim and cannot provide evidence that it is authorized by God’s Word, it is a danger to one’s soul.

Therefore, “...whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus...” (Colossians 3:17). That phrase, “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” merely means by Christ’s authority, much like an officer of the law has the right to expect a law-abiding citizen to “stop, in the name of the law,” i.e., by the authority of the law of the land. No service or worship to God is authorized unless Jesus has given it His authority.

I would not presume to speak for you but I will echo Joshua’s standard response in this matter: “...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15). When you visit the Park Heights church of Christ, expect to hear a Thus Saith the Lord; nothing more, nothing less.