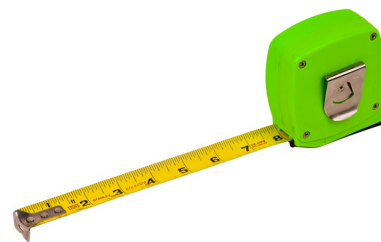


In **Matthew 21:23-27**, some chief priests and elders of the people asked Jesus a great question: “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?”

In answering, Jesus taught a valuable lesson: ultimately there are only two sources of authority—heaven or human. If heaven, why wouldn’t we respond? If human, why couldn’t we take it or leave it?

Throughout his ministry, Jesus acted as one who had authority. The people who saw and heard him recognized that fact (**Matt 7:28-29; 9:1-8**). The clearest statement of Jesus concerning his authority was delivered after his resurrection from the dead.



“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (**Matt 28:16-20**)

From this point on, these appointed ambassadors of Jesus acted with authority in Jesus’ name. He had commanded them, as the source of all authority in heaven and on earth, to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that they had received from him. We can see it all at work in **Acts 2** when Peter and the rest of the apostles boldly preached...

“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... So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (**2:38, 41-42**)

We can see this authority at work in the words of the apostle Paul...

If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. (**1 Cor 14:37**)

What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. (**Phil 4:9**)

The New Testament is not simply a “love letter” from God or an interesting but outdated historical document. As we handle it, we are interacting with heavenly authority. It is the means our Creator has used to communicate his authoritative expectations to us. The question is, will we submit ourselves to him? Will we depend upon him for guidance, correction, and hope? Let’s talk about it...

## For Class & Family Discussion:

- “By what authority?” ([Matt 21:23](#)). What does it mean to do something “by authority”?
- “And who gave you this authority?” What difference does that question make?
- Is “from heaven or from man” ([Matt 21:25](#)) still a valid gauge for modern discussions of authority? If so, why?
- What must it have looked and sounded like for Jesus to “teach as one who had authority” ([Matt 7:28-29](#))?
- In your own words, what is Jesus communicating in [Matthew 28:16-20](#), and why do his words still matter?
- Let’s turn our Bibles together back to [2 Timothy 3:14-17](#) and read those verses together. What is Paul telling us about Scripture? What is its power? When the apostles communicated that what they were writing was guided by the Holy Spirit of God, what did they want their readers to understand?
- Do we still need to be “devoted” to “the apostles’ teaching” ([Acts 2:42](#))? If so, why? What will that look like today?
- Let’s also turn our Bibles back to [Ephesians 5:15-17](#) and [2 Timothy 1:13-14](#) and read those passages together. Can I “understand what the will of the Lord is” today? If so, how?
- How will healthy respect for God’s authority keep me from the “lawlessness” that Jesus warned people about in [Matthew 7:21-23](#)?