

# Authority in the Scriptures - Part 2

by Colin Anderson

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of submission to authority in our lives, recognizing God's authority, and responding appropriately to human authority.*

**Scripture:** Leviticus 5:1-6, Matthew 12:46-50, Matthew 26:60, Matthew 26:63-64

**Topics:** "Authority"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on various passages from the Bible, highlighting the fulfillment of God's word through Jesus. The preacher emphasizes Jesus' obedience and silence during his crucifixion, as prophesied in Isaiah 53:7. The sermon also touches on Jesus' authority and his relationship with his disciples, emphasizing the importance of doing the will of God. The preacher then discusses the importance of speaking truth and doing what is right in the sight of the Lord, using the example of driving to a meeting and resisting the temptation to speed.

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## Transcript

I want to try in a few moments to wrap up some of the loose ends connected with what we have been sharing with you about authority in the Scriptures. Let's just look at Ephesians 6 and 1 again, not because I want to emphasize at this point the need for children to obey their parents, but because we want to just remind ourselves of a principle here Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Submission to authority is in many cases synonymous with being right or righteous, and we have seen as we have been looking at this subject how important it is to us to be righteous, to do what is right and pleasing in the sight of the law.

Now, submission to authority often requires that I acknowledge the right of others, their prerogative, to tell me what to do, even though I may know better. And I don't say that with my tongue in my cheek. I might know better than those who are in authority over me, but I have a responsibility to submit to them when they finally decide what they are about to do.

However, I may reject the decisions of an authority. By an authority I mean either the government or others that we're considering. I may reject the decisions of an authority only when that authority transgresses its scriptural limits.

That is, that authority has a right to speak, and it speaks with the authority of God backing it up. Even though what it says is not right, God maintains the authority because it is authority. The decrees might

even be in some cases cruel, and God is not behind the cruelty, but he's behind the principle of authority which he has established until he removes it.

And I believe you will find, as you look through scripture, that that is the case. God himself makes himself responsible to remove the authority from its place when it does not fulfill his ultimate object and purpose. But, in the process of fulfilling that object and purpose, that authority may sometimes express things which are not the mind of God immediately.

However, the Christian recognizes the authority, recognizes it's established by God, and bows to it. Now, may I look at Luke chapter 2? Luke chapter 2, I want to look at some examples in the life of the Lord Jesus. Luke chapter 2 and verse 41.

Speaking about the child Jesus, it says, and his parents used to go to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover, and when he became 12 they went up there according to the custom of the feast, and as they were returning after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, and his parents were unaware of it. How that happened I am not sure. It adds, they supposed him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey, and they began looking for him among their relatives and acquaintance, and when they did not find him they returned to Jerusalem looking for him.

I don't know enough about the circumstances to know whether this would even suggest a measure of irresponsibility on their part or not. I make no comment as to that. It came about that after three days they found him in the temple.

Now, I do want to make a comment as to that. It seems strange to me that they would spend three days looking for him in Jerusalem. It really does, and yet knowing human nature may be not so strange.

Had not the child Jesus by this time manifested an extraordinary interest in the things of God? I'm sure it must have been so. I have been conscious in dealing with very young children at times, that God has done the work of salvation in a child at a very young age, maybe even three years old. I have been conscious that that child is truly a child of God, or I have believed it is so.

And later, as they have grown, they have proven that indeed God worked by his Spirit in very early years in the case of that child. I'm not sure whether it's the little flock hymn book. I wish I could refresh my mind as to the story about this, but I hope I'm going to be accurate in what I'm going to say.

I know that the general circumstances that I describe are correct, but there was a little boy a number of years ago who afterwards became the editor of one of the hymn books that was in use among assemblies for many years, and still is used, though maybe in a revised form. It was in the days of what we know as early brethren, and this little boy went with his mother. I think their father, his father was dead, but he went with his mother to the breaking of bread service in the home or house where it was held, and the mother looked down at the child and noticed that even despite his tender years, when brethren were engaged in prayer, the tears were rolling down his cheeks, and she thought to herself, well he certainly seems to be really entering into the spirit of things.

A little later on, thanks was given for the bread, and the little boy looked up at his mother, and he said, mother may I? And she remembered that verse about stumbling one of these little ones that believe in me, and she just bent down and she said, my dear if you love the Lord Jesus you may. He broke bread from that day on till his dying day. Now I'm sure that there are cases where children have responded to the Lord

in very tender years.

As a matter of fact my oldest boy, when he was about three years old, talking to his mother said that he really loved the Lord Jesus, and he has maintained a consistent testimony that far, and I cannot doubt that that he is a child of God. I don't suppose he'll ever be able to say there was a time when, and a manner how, and a place where. I don't think he even remembers the incident himself, but I believe that God worked very young in the lives of some children, especially if they're brought up in Christian homes.

That being so, what I'm saying is this. Surely the child Jesus, by the age of 12 years, had manifested an extraordinary, to say the least, interest in spiritual things. Now if I had a boy who was interested in locomotives, or diesel engines, or something like that, and I lost him in a museum, you know one of these very large museums, with all its various departments, it wouldn't be very long before I would think, well now I know where I'll find him.

I'll find him in the engineering division, particularly where the locomotives are, because that's where his interests are, and that's where I would go straight away. Now what does this suggest to us? Doesn't it suggest that perhaps Joseph and Mary were a little bit dull in their understanding of what he was entering into? At least it seems so to me, that the scripture notes that it took them the three days to find him. Now, however, they said to him, in verse 48, Son why have you treated us this way? Behold your father and I have been anxiously looking for you.

And he said to them, why is it that you were looking for me? Now this seems to confirm what I'm suggesting. Did you not know that I had to be in my father's house? Or as the A.V. says, wist you not that I must be about my father's business, but surely it amounts to the same thing, that you would find him where those things were finding their expression in Jerusalem. So that would be in the temple, and it seems to me that that confirms my thought that it's strange that they were dull enough, and I say it with respect to them, not to appreciate where he would be.

Now with that as a background, they find him, you'll notice, verse 46, in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers. Now notice this, listening to them and asking them questions. Now I think if I had been writing an apocryphal story of Jesus, I would say he was sitting in the temple teaching the teachers.

Wouldn't you write that if you were trying to impress people about the the child Jesus, and you wanted to be very very sure that they recognized that he was indeed the Son of God? I would write, if I was writing an apocryphal version, I would write and say that he was in the temple teaching the teachers, but the scripture doesn't say that, because that's not what he was doing. Now no doubt they learned a lot, but they learned a lot from his questions and his answers. He was listening to them and asking them questions, and they were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

The reason I mention this is that it's such a little beautiful vignette of the life of the Lord Jesus at this period in his ministry, and his life I should say, because it reveals to us the appropriateness of his attitude toward those who were his elders. Here he is in the temple asking them questions. They're amazed at his understanding and answers, but he is not at this point saying to them, verily verily I say unto you, that would have been utterly inappropriate for him since he had come into this world as a baby and had grown up as a boy.

The point is here that, regardless of what was in his mind and his knowledge of the things of God, he was submissive to them. He acted appropriately towards them in the temple. Now notice, go on a little bit

further.

Verse 51, and he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and he continued in subjection to them. Continued in subjection to them, yet they didn't know where to find him. He is fulfilling what is right and appropriate in his life as a child with Joseph and Mary.

Now having noticed that, let's pass on to Matthew chapter 3 please. Matthew chapter 3 verse 13. Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan, coming to John to be baptized by him.

But John tried to prevent him, saying, I have need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me? But Jesus answered and said to him, permit it at this time, for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he permitted him. In other words, John, it's not a question of who should be baptizing who at this point, as to moral fitness or spiritual fitness.

That is not the question I'm entering into. The question I'm entering into at this point is what is right at this point. What is appropriate for me? Whether it honors me above you is not the point.

I'm not concerned with that. That, if I may paraphrase this liberally, is my father's business to honor me. My business here in submission to do the father's will is at this point to submit to you in the right of baptism, and this he did.

This of course is not to be coupled with the verse that tells us that there were those coming to John to be baptized of him confessing their sins. It does not say that, of course, of the Lord Jesus, for that would be certainly untrue. But he submitted to the right of baptism because he had come to fulfill everything that was right for him, to fulfill all righteousness.

What is righteousness? It has been defined as the fulfillment of obligations that are mine in every given situation. That is, if I'm a child, it's righteous for me to be submissive to my parents. If I'm a servant, it's righteous for me to be submissive to my master.

If I'm a father, it's righteous for me to not provoke my children to wrath. There are certain attitudes that are right for me in every given situation, and it's only right for me to respond to those appropriately, and this the Lord Jesus did. But here's an interesting thing.

The father immediately vindicates him. Lest we should become confused in our thinking and say, well Jesus was baptized, I can't understand why he should be. He's immediately vindicated, and after being baptized, Jesus went up and immediately from the water, and behold the heavens were open, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and coming upon him, and behold a voice out of the heavens saying, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

May it not be that if we would leave the vindication of our rights, our privileges, our honour to God, more frequently we would be more frequently honoured. But so often we are anxious to maintain a position which we suppose we ought to have, and in the very process of doing so, we cut off God from the opportunity of vindicating us and honouring us himself. Humble yourself therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in the appropriate time, in due time.

Matthew chapter 12 please, verse 46, while he was still speaking to the multitudes. Now the Lord Jesus is not under the authority of Joseph and Mary. In fact the indications are that Joseph himself had died, the Lord Jesus has launched out onto his ministry, and traveling with his disciples to various places is

preaching the word of God.

He is the one you remember who has left home in order that he may minister to the multitudes, and he can say, and this is characteristic of him, that the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay his head. He has begun his ministry, he's fulfilling his Father's will in coming into this world and in ministering to the multitudes. While he was still speaking, that is not at the end of his message, but while he was in the middle of this ministry, behold his mother and his brothers were standing outside seeking to speak to him.

Someone said to him, behold your mother and your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to you, but he answered the one who was telling him and said, who is my mother and who are my brothers? Here was an intrusion into his fulfillment of his ministry. He was not now, as he was as a boy of twelve, subject to his parents. Not now in that position at all.

They now are intruding into an area where a greater authority prevails, and gently but very firmly he turns the occasion, this interruption in his ministry, into spiritual good. Stretching out his hand towards his disciples he shows that there is a relationship that is greater than the earthly relationship. Behold my mother and my brothers, for whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother.

Matthew chapter 26 please. Matthew chapter 26. I marvel at the perfection, though I'm not surprised at it, but I marvel at the perfection of his ways, and it causes my heart to bow in worship.

Matthew 26 and verse 60. They did not find suitable false witnesses, even though many false witnesses came forward, but later on two came forward, and they said this man stated I'm able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days. The high priest stood up and said to him, do you make no answer? What is it that these men are testifying against you? But Jesus kept silent.

He was silent before his accusers. This surely in fulfillment of scripture. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, he opened not his mouth.

He is fulfilling the word of God. But then notice the change. He answers in verse 64 and says you have said it yourself.

He agrees to answer. Nevertheless I tell you hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven. That was the climatic word as far as the high priest was concerned.

That turned the whole thing around. Now I had the opportunity I was seeking, and he rinses his robes and he says he has blasphemed and so on. Now why did the Lord Jesus answer him at this point? Well this just shows the perfection of his person.

I adjure you by the living God that you tell us whether you're the Christ, the Son of God. In Leviticus chapter 5 it tells us that if a man hears the voice of swearing, which doesn't mean that if he hears somebody swearing using unnecessary language in conversation, but rather when he hears an oath, he is responsible under God to declare what he has witnessed or what he knows when he is put under oath. And if he fails to do that he bears sin, and it is required of him that he brings a suitable offering.

Leviticus 5 tells you all about that. Now the Lord Jesus was sinless, and when he heard the high priest say, I adjure you by the living God, he immediately responds to the word of God, Leviticus 5 and 1, and he speaks up and bears witness to that which up to this point about which he had kept silent. This shows us how marvelously the Lord Jesus kept everything in its balance.

He knew how to be submissive to authorities that he recognized were over him as he grew up. He knew how to respond appropriately when it was a question of giving to Caesar or not. He knew how to answer that you must render to God the things that are God's, but also you render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and even they marvel at his answers.

So there was perfection here in the life of the Lord Jesus. Now when you and I act rightly and respond properly to those whom God has given responsibility of headship or leadership over us, we do some wonderful things for ourselves. Number one, we give ourselves unrecognized protection.

Let me just give you a beautiful illustration of this, at least I think it is. Just after we'd moved to Burlington, we got a phone call from a lady, and I went to visit her, and my wife and I got acquainted with her, and she told us something just in casual conversation that made me just thank the Lord for this illustration which I want to share with you of how being under authority protects you. This lady was telling us that there was a free-wheeling neighbor, a man lived nearby, who made it his business to see how many girls he could conquer in the district, and how he could kind of show his influence over them, and so on.

And she said, I've been conscious of him buzzing around our home since we moved in, and she said he's not the most savory sort of person, but he comes and tells me what he thinks, and so on, and he's very affable and friendly, and the other day he came over and he said, you know, I see you're mowing the lawns, not your husband, and he said, you know, if you're going to buy a new mower, and you obviously need one, you should get an electric mower, because it'll be much easier for you. You won't have to bother with the cord, and it's much lighter to handle, and since you only have a small area of lawn, an electric mower would be the very best. So she thanked him for his advice, and he went on his way.

A couple of days later, he saw her out there pushing a rather heavy mower, gasoline propelled, and he came over to her, and chided her, and he said, hey, I thought I told you, Lucy, that wasn't her name, I thought I told you, Lucy, to get yourself an electric mower. She said, yes, you did. But you see, my husband said he wanted me to get this kind of mower, and I'm responsible to listen to him.

Oh, I see, he said, and he backed right off. And you know, he's had a different attitude to her ever since. Why? Because with her unwittingly revealing that she was in subjection to her husband, this man suddenly realized that any approaches he made to her, he would have to make that approach in view of a husband whom she respected and whom she obeyed.

Do you see the point? And so many times we don't realize it, but by acting inappropriately to authority, we lay ourselves open to an attack of the enemy, from or to infiltration from the world. It is tremendously important for believers to respond appropriately to authority. One more verse in 1st John chapter 3, please.

1st John chapter 3. For when we do what is right, we put ourselves in a place of power with God. Have you ever noticed how in the psalms, when the psalmist is praying, he almost seems to get self-righteous, and he says, Lord, you know I haven't lifted up my heart to do this, and I haven't let my hands do that. And you say, well boy, you know, blowing himself up a little bit, isn't he? No, he isn't.

He's just saying what every one of us ought to say. He's just saying, Lord, although I'm accused of this and that and the other, those things are not true. Now, he's not claiming sinlessness.

He had to confess his sins, as we are told to confess our sins, but as far as the accusations of men, he could say, these things are not true. And this gave him power in coming into the presence of God. He felt he had a right, a claim to God's ear, because he was doing what is right.

Now notice what it says in the 1st of John chapter 3, lest you should think that that's something that holds only under the law, and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. Now, turning it around the other way, if I don't keep his commandments and I don't do those things that are pleasing in his sight, then my prayers are not going to be heard. For the eyes of the Lord are upon those who do what is right, the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry.

And we need to remember that. It doesn't mean simply that because I am a child of God, God is going to hear my prayer. The very verse that we sometimes use about the unconverted applies equally to us.

That verse which says, if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. So, there must be righteousness on our part. Moreover, righteousness will give us power with men.

If you want to go and speak to others and have God back up your word with authority, even though your words are stumbling and you don't say things perfectly, if you want to have the power of heaven behind you, do what is right in the sight of the Lord, and you will find God will bless your ministry. How often, when driving to a meeting and realizing I'm a little on the late side, I have been tempted, sorely tempted, to put my foot down a little more heavily on the pedal, or to make it a little easier for myself to keep my eyes strictly on the road and not to notice that creeping needle, because I want to get there. I don't want to be late.

And I remember that the hasty spirit of man, the wrath of man, does not work the righteousness of God. And again and again, when such situations have arisen, and I try to see that they don't arrive too often, I try to be here on time, but when those situations do arise, again and again I have seen, well, after all, when I arrived I didn't need to hurry. Somehow there's been a delay in the meeting and they got started late for some reason or another, so here we are on time after all.

Now my point is this.

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