

## ***“By What Power, or By What Name”***

In Solomon's Porch or Portico, depending on which version of the Bible you read and how old the diction is, there was a lame man. This man depended on begging for his lively hood, as many beggars do today, and asked Peter and John for some money as they passed by. Peter did not have any money but gave him something much better: the ability to walk! Through the power of Jesus Christ he commanded the man to stand and walk! As one could imagine, this caused quite a stir. A multitude of people came to see who had healed him and how the healing was done. Peter and John seized the opportunity and began to preach to the people (Acts 3).

In Acts 4, the rulers became jealous that the people were gathering to hear Peter and John, so they had them arrested and brought before them. When they had secured the apostles, they began to question them. The first question they asked was, “*By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?*” The question is simple, yet vital to any judicial hearing. Before anyone can determine if something is right or wrong, they must establish the power or authority by which it was done. If someone were to take a lady's purse and search it, the lady would have to know what authority that person had to search her things. If she gave them permission or the law (a higher power than her) gave this person that right, than everything would be fine. If the person did not have that authority, the same act, done by the same person, would be received much differently. It is no different in religion.

To help understand this discussion, the terms being used must be defined. Authority is defined by Webster as, “*power to influence or command thought, opinion, or behavior: freedom granted by one in authority*” (Merriam-Webster Online, “authority”). Important things must be understood in this definition. First, one must have the power to influence or command thought, opinion, or behavior. One cannot go up to a person they do not know and command them to do anything and expect them to do it without a recognition of power or authority. If someone commanded a person to give them their car, they would be foolish to expect the other person to comply unless they had a symbol of authority to make the other person recognize their own authority: a gun, badge, etc. In a secular context everyone understands this.

In religion, everyone must establish these same things. A person cannot speak for God, unless God has given them that authority. The rulers of the Jews would punish these men if they healed the lame man of their own authority. They were the rulers and these men were under their subjection, unless they appealed to someone greater than the rulers, the rulers had the right to punish them. As one continues to read in Acts 4, the apostles make that appeal to a higher authority. The apostles tell the rulers, “*Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole*” (vs. 10). They appeal to the name and authority of Jesus!

Who gave Jesus authority? In Matthew 28:18, Jesus is speaking to His apostles before He ascended into heaven and He states, “*All power is given unto me in heaven and in*

earth.” God had given all power and authority to Christ! Christ revealed that, *“I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak”* (John 12:49-50). The Almighty God gave all authority to Christ and Christ spoke all things that came from the Father.

One might bring up, “How do we establish authority today, now that we do not have Christ living here with us on earth?” This is a great question worthy to look into. Christ chose from the Jews twelve men to be His apostles. He promises them in John 14 that, *“the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you”* (vs 26). The promise was that the apostles would have the Holy Spirit, the comforter, and He would guide them in all truth. They would not speak out of God’s and Christ’s authority. The apostles have written many letters that are in the Bible. The entire Bible was written by men that were inspired by the Holy Spirit. In one such letter, Paul the apostle writes, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”* (II Timothy 3:16-17). Paul, inspired by God, reveals that we have everything that we need to live a godly life. If one desires to do something “good” or “perfect,” if someone desires to reproof, correct, instruct, or find doctrine they must appeal to inspired scripture!

Anything one does in this life can be put into two categories: good or bad. If it is good then it is approved by God, in His authority, and found in scripture. If it is bad then it is outside of God’s authority, not found in scripture, and not approved by God. Let everyone take the time to examine self through scripture and appeal to the ultimate authority of God.