

### DOING ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD

Jesus was once asked, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” (Matthew 21:23) Jesus had come to Jerusalem on the first day of the week, (this was the last week before his death on the cross). When Jesus entered the temple he found it full of business men selling their wares. So he fashioned a whip and began driving these people out of the temple area. Matthew says that “he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.” Jesus said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.” (Matthew 21:13 ESV). Afterward, Jesus began healing the blind and the lame who were there in the temple. The next day, the chief priests and the elders of the people asked him: “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?”

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When Jesus took action and disturbed the status quo, the government wanted to know WHY he had done it and who told him he could do it! By what authority are you doing these things? Authority is an important issue in religion, as well as in everyday life. Those men were right to ask Jesus this question about His authority! The Word of God is the Christian’s authority. The apostle Paul told Christians “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (Col 3:17 ESV) Doing something “in the name of the Lord Jesus” is to do so by Jesus’ authority. And what right does Jesus have to be ordering our lives this way? Well, that’s what those rulers and elders wanted to know! And their question is an important idea. So, I ask you, why do you do the things that you do?

Why do Christians pray? Well, we have been taught to pray both by God’s Word and the example of God’s people. But the authority for praying comes through a **command** from God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus once told a parable “to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.” (Luke 18:1 ESV) Here is an “ought”; we ought always to pray. Prayer is the Lord’s antidote for discouragement. Don’t lose heart, pray, says Jesus. If the Lord Jesus has commanded us to pray then that is good authority for us to do it. The apostle John wrote that “whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his

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commandments and do what pleases him.” (1 John 3:22 ESV) When we are keeping the command of the Lord then our prayers are effective. Jesus also taught us to pray in his name. He told his disciples, “In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” (John 16:23-24 ESV) Yes, discouragement turns to fullness of joy when we pray.

Prayer teaches us, then, that the authority of Jesus is needed when we come before God in prayer.

When it comes to commandments, from God or from Jesus, commandments can be both positive and negative. For instance, if God’s word commands us to abstain from every appearance of evil, then that is a negative command. God has said, “Thou shalt not...” do this or that. On the other hand, God, through His inspired writers, has also issued positive commands. “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.” And so, Christians have “worship services” to God. New Testament worship services centered on actions that are approved by God. This means there is found authority for those worship actions. We have already discussed prayer. It is very appropriate that in worship services there should be prayers. They are authorized.

What about the Lord’s Supper, is it authorized? Yes, the Lord commanded his disciples to partake of the emblems of his body and blood. In 1 Corinthians 11:20 this observance is called the Lord’s Supper. And Paul told the Corinthians that he delivered to them the same instructions that he had received from the Lord. (1 Cor 11:23.) The Lord himself on the same night that he was betrayed, referring to the bread, said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’” (1 Corinthians 11:24, 25 ESV) That is the command of the Lord. So our observance of the Lord’s Supper is commanded.

But the Lord did not specify how often the Supper was to be observed. That’s right! So when and how often are Christians supposed to observe the Lord’s supper? To answer that question we must rely upon a second way in which God’s Word authorizes us to do things. Not only does the Lord authorize us to observe

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the Lord's Supper, but the **examples** of the first century Christians give us an approved way in which to obey the command. For instance, the Christians who lived in and around Troas came together on the first day of the week for the purpose of breaking bread. (Acts 20:7) "Breaking bread" was the way in which the early disciples spoke of the Lord's Supper, probably because Jesus had "broke" the bread before dispensing it to his apostles. Those Christians at Troas were approved in their practice of observing the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. They were not rebuked or corrected for that practice. Therefore, Christians can take comfort and authorization to do the same thing that the early Christians did in order to observe the Lord's Supper.

Now this does not mean that everything the early Christians did is an example to us. For instance, the Corinthians were rebuked and corrected for the example they set in observing the Supper. Although they were meeting on the first day of the week, the Corinthians were mixing together the Lord's emblems with their own suppers that they had brought to the assembly of Christians. So Paul rebuked them and showed them how they must make a difference between the Lord's Supper and their own. You can read his instructions in 1 Corinthians, chapter 11.

But, how do Christians today know what to use as emblems for the Lord's body and blood? Can Christians eat cake and drink hot chocolate in observing the Lord's Supper. Here again we rely upon an approved example to show us what is acceptable; and this time we rely upon the Lord's own example. We know what the Lord did is right! Jesus called the contents of the cup the "fruit of the vine" in Matthew 26:29. The fruit of the grape, then, is authorized content for the Lord's cup.

What kind of bread is approved to represent the Lord's body? Here again the **example** of our Lord dictates what we do. Jesus and His apostles were observing the Passover when Jesus commanded the Lord Supper. The Passover was always observed with unleavened bread. Therefore, the bread that Jesus broke and dispensed to the disciples was unleavened bread. That's the bread He held up before the apostles when he said, "This is my body." The apostle Paul also alludes to this in 1 Corinthians 5:8. Therefore, Christians today feel perfectly authorized by command and example to observe the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week, with the emblems being unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. The

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unleavened bread stands for His body; the fruit of the vine stands for the Lord's blood, which he called "the blood of the new covenant." When Christians begin to add to the Lord's Supper unauthorized practices it raises doubt and division among Christ's followers.

The same thing can be said of music in church services. It is clear from the New Testament that the early Christians sang psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs as a part of their worship services. In fact, the apostle Paul commanded this of the Christians at Colossi, when he wrote, "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Col 3:15-17 ESV). Any other kind of music that might be added to worship services would be unauthorized. That means that we do not have a command or an approved example of Christians worshipping with instruments of music.

One reason that there is so much religious division between followers of Christ is because not everyone adheres to authorized worship activities. The worship assembly of believers should be the happiest place on earth where believers come together to participate in authorized worshipful practices. Shouldn't this be the place of common ground?

What will you say when someone asks you, "By what authority do you these things?" "Who gave you this authority?" Happy is the person who can answer, "why Jesus Christ commanded it," or they can say, "the early disciples established an approved example for it."