

# Authority

By Jerry C. Brewer

The Bible often speaks of something being done when, in fact, others did that thing under His authority. When Jesus was asked to heal a centurion's servant, He approached the house, but ... "the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, 'Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it'" (Luke 7:6-8 NKJV). The meaning—Jesus could heal his servant by His authority without actually being present in his house!



Which one of the disciples stood at the foot of the cross?

The same kind of language was used of Jesus baptizing His followers. "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized... Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification. And they came unto John and said unto him, 'Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him (John 3:22, 25-26)! But John later records; "Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), He left Judea and departed again to Galilee" (John 4:1-3).

The centurion said his servants carried out his order when acting *under his authority*. Jesus was said to baptize more disciples than John, although Jesus did not do the actual baptizing. His disciples did the baptizing *under His authority*.

Now, please consider the Great Commission. It has been claimed that this commission was not given to all Christians—either in the first century or today—but to the apostles only. It is a fact: it was spoken to the apostles (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). However, does this fact mean the church (His body of Christians) today is under no obligation to obey? Yes or no? The New Testament was not written to us, but its precepts are still binding on us today because it was written for us.

For instance, Paul wrote "But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us" (2 Thessalonians 3:6). Does that mean the command is *not* applicable today? No! It was written from an apostle writing under the authority of Jesus Christ. Apostolic authority is Christ's authority and when we obey apostolic authority, we obey Christ!

Before He ascended, Jesus said to His apostles, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit empowered the apostles to be witnesses for Jesus—His only witnesses (there are none like them today)—and their authority as His witnesses would extend beyond their writing. When they "spoke" by Holy Spirit inspiration as they were empowered, it was as though Jesus Himself spoke (2 Corinthians 5:20). The apostles were "under authority" from Christ and their teaching was Christ's teaching.

After Pentecost (see Acts 2) there was growth and persecution. Persecution culminated in the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:54-60). Prior to this event, it seems preaching had been restricted to Jerusalem, but this activity (persecution that followed) caused members of the church to flee the city. One of the most significant passages says: "...and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, **except the apostles** (emphasis JCB) ...therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:1, 4). The Holy Spirit via Luke wrote, "except the apostles". When Christians *literally* traveled in Judea and Samaria—where Jesus said the apostles would be witnesses—the apostles were still in Jerusalem. Yet, it can be truthfully said the apostles preached "throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria" the same as "Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus baptized not, but his disciples)." Where did "scattered brethren" get the message they preached? Yes, from the apostles! They preached the "apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42). The doctrine "under authority" of the apostles was confirmed by miracles (Acts 8:6-7, 12). The apostles were witnesses when "...those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch...preaching the Lord Jesus (Acts 11:19-20). When news of this came to the apostles' ears in Jerusalem, they did not go to Antioch themselves. Instead, they sent Barnabas under their authority. "And a great many people were added to the Lord" (Acts 11:24).

To say the Great Commission is not for us today is to repudiate the authority of Christ expressed through His apostles. He sent them "under authority" and they, *in His name*, sent others "under authority." We are as much under the authority of Christ today as His inspired apostles were in the first century.

**To all our visitors:** *Please feel free to participate!*

You should expect to hear singing with voices only, a few "family" announcements, prayers spoken, and see the Lord's Supper offered, then free-willed giving, and gospel preaching from the Bible.

Any response is up to you and will be kindly received.

We are glad you decided to worship God with us on this first day of the week!

**Bday/Anniv Lunch:** 2nd Sunday...

**Friday Bible Study:** from 7 to 8 PM!

We are studying some New Testament commands of God for us today...

**NMCCH:** We are waiting to hear of the next item to gather.

**Ladies Day:** Saturday (7/20) at 8:30AM, Grand Avenue, "Women Working Together Harmoniously."