

Thought For The Week

Articles: *Respecting Christ's Authority* ~1200 words, ~300 words

Respecting Christ's Authority

A Biblical Imperative

In a world where opinions abound and personal preferences often dictate beliefs, the authority of Jesus Christ stands as an unyielding cornerstone of Christian faith. Consider a conversation aboard an airplane where a brother in Christ shared Jesus' teachings with a fellow passenger. The response? "That is his (Christ's) opinion." Similarly, in a discussion about the origins of denominations, a young man likened the church to a tree, where branches diverged because people disliked certain teachings of Jesus and chose to alter them. Yet, as the Scriptures reveal, such alterations defy the natural order—like a tree bearing mismatched fruit—and ignore the profound authority with which Christ spoke and acted. This article explores the multifaceted authority of Jesus, drawing from key biblical passages, and urges believers to respect it through obedience, lest they face judgment on the last day.

Jesus' authority first shines through in His teaching. During the Sermon on the Mount, as recorded in Matthew 7:28-29, the crowds were astonished because He taught not as the scribes, who relied on tradition and interpretation, but with inherent authority. Mark 1:21-22 echoes this, noting how His words amazed listeners in the synagogue. Six times in Matthew 5, Jesus contrasted prevailing understandings with His definitive declarations: "You have heard it said... but I say to you." These statements were not mere suggestions or human opinions; they carried the weight of divine truth. Even beyond these explicit contrasts, His entire message exuded authority, challenging listeners to align their lives with God's will rather than cultural norms.

This authority extended beyond words to command over the natural world. In Matthew 8:23-27, Jesus and His disciples encountered a fierce storm on the Sea of Galilee. As waves swamped the boat, Jesus slept peacefully. Awakened by His fearful followers crying, "Lord, save us, we are perishing," He rebuked their lack of faith: "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Rising, He commanded the winds and sea to be still, and calm ensued. The disciples marveled, asking, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" This miracle underscores Jesus' dominion as the Creator of the universe, affirming that nature itself submits to His power. Such displays were not for show but to reveal His divine identity and build faith in those who witnessed them.

Equally compelling is Christ's authority over demonic forces, as illustrated in Mark 5:1-20. Upon arriving in the region of the Gerasenes, Jesus encountered a man possessed by unclean spirits, dwelling among tombs. No chains could bind him; he shattered shackles with supernatural strength, roaming night and day, crying out and self-inflicting wounds. Spotting Jesus from afar, the man ran and worshiped Him, but the demons within cried, "What have I to do with you, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore you by God that you do not torment me." Jesus commanded the spirit to come out, inquiring its name: "Legion, for we are many." The demons begged not to be sent out of the country but into a nearby herd of about two thousand swine. Jesus permitted it, and the spirits entered the pigs, which then rushed into the sea and drowned.

The swineherds fled, alerting the locals, who arrived to find the formerly possessed man seated, clothed, and in his right mind beside Jesus. Fear gripped them—not awe at the deliverance, but terror, perhaps over the economic loss of the swine. They pleaded with Jesus to leave their region. The healed man, eager to follow Jesus, was instead instructed: "Go home to your friends and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you and how he has had compassion on you." He obeyed, proclaiming throughout Decapolis what Jesus had done, and all marveled. Here, demons recognized Jesus' supremacy, yet humans resisted. This account highlights Christ's unchallenged power over spiritual darkness, a authority that demands respect rather than rejection.

Further, Jesus demonstrated authority through His touch, a gesture laden with compassion and power. In Mark 1:40-45, a leper approached, kneeling and imploring, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Under Mosaic Law, lepers were isolated; contact rendered one unclean, and the afflicted must warn others by crying "Unclean, unclean." Defying convention, Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand, touched the man, and declared, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately, the leprosy vanished. Jesus warned him to speak to no one but to present himself to the priest and offer the required sacrifices as testimony. This touch not only healed but symbolized Jesus' authority to transcend legal barriers for mercy's sake.

Another instance involves a twelve-year-old girl on the brink of death. Summoned to heal her, Jesus en route received word of her passing. Undeterred, He encouraged faith. Arriving, He took her hand and commanded, "Arise." She revived, and He instructed her parents to give her food. Through such acts—cleansing lepers, raising the dead—Jesus' touch conveyed life-giving power, urging us not to dismiss Him as merely human but to honor His divine commands.

Transitioning to the source and implications of this authority, John 12:48-50 reveals that Jesus spoke not on His own but as commanded by the Father: "He who rejects me and does not receive my words has that which judges him. The word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." His teachings were not opinions but divine directives leading to everlasting life. Matthew 28:18 affirms, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth." This authority was granted post-resurrection, after fulfilling the Father's will through His life, death, burial, and rising. Even on the cross, He interceded, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." We cannot casually dismiss or alter His words without consequence; they will judge us.

The young man's tree analogy aptly describes denominational divisions: branches form when people dislike and change Jesus' teachings. Yet, we lack authority to modify divine truth. John 14:23-24 states, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him. He who does not love me does not keep my words, and the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me." Love for Christ manifests in obedience, far surpassing mere liking.

Some claim to follow only Jesus' "red-letter" words, but this overlooks the Holy Spirit's role. In John 15:26-27, Jesus promised, "When the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will testify of me." This Spirit guided the apostles, ensuring the New Testament—from Acts to Revelation—conveys Christ's will. As 2 Peter 1:20-21 explains, no prophecy arises from private interpretation; holy men spoke as moved by the Holy Spirit. Peter equates Paul's epistles with other Scriptures, warning against twisting them to one's destruction. Thus, the entire New Testament, not just Jesus' direct quotes, demands respect as divinely inspired testimony of Christ.

In conclusion, respecting Christ's authority means embracing His teachings, miracles, and commands without alteration. He offers salvation through belief, repentance, confession, and baptism for sin remission, urging the wayward to return. As the sermons emphasize, let us not be like those who feared and rejected Him but like the delivered man who proclaimed His compassion. In a fragmented world, honoring Christ's all-encompassing authority fosters unity and eternal life. Why not commit today to live under His rule, keeping His words as the path to the Father's love?

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Respecting Christ's Authority

In everyday conversations, the authority of Jesus Christ is often diminished. Aboard an airplane, one man dismissed biblical teachings as merely "his (Christ's) opinion." In discussions about denominational origins, some liken the church to a tree where branches diverged because people disliked Jesus' words and changed them—producing mismatched fruit, contrary to nature.

Scripture, however, presents Jesus as teaching with unmatched authority. Crowds marveled at the Sermon on the Mount because He spoke not like the scribes, who cited traditions, but with divine power (Matthew 7:28-29; Mark 1:21-22). Repeatedly in Matthew 5, He declared, "You have heard it said... but I say to you," six times asserting His supreme right to command.

This authority extended beyond words. He rebuked storms, bringing instant calm to wind and sea, astonishing disciples who asked, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" (Matthew 8:23-27). He cast out a legion of demons from a tormented man in the Gerasenes, permitting them into swine that drowned, restoring the man to soundness of mind (Mark 5:1-20). With compassionate touch, He cleansed a leper—defying Mosaic isolation laws—and raised a dead girl by taking her hand.

Jesus affirmed, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). He spoke not His own opinions but the Father's commands, warning that His words will judge us on the last day (John 12:48-50). Love for Him means keeping His word (John 14:23-24). The Holy Spirit, sent by Father and Son, guided the apostles, ensuring the entire New Testament—from Acts to Revelation—carries Christ's authority (John 15:26-27; 2 Peter 1:21).

Respecting Christ's authority demands obedience: believing, repenting, confessing Him, and being baptized for remission of sins, then remaining faithful. In an age of preferences and alterations, we must honor His unchanging truth rather than reshape it. True discipleship submits fully to the One who holds all authority.

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