

# *Redwater Restorer*

*"The voice of one crying in the wilderness..." (Matthew 3:3)*

Volume 2

No.6

August 21, 2004

## *Standard Of Authority*

### *Jesus Christ Has Been Given All Authority*

Christ claimed all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him (Matt.28:18) He therefore expects us to observe all things He has commanded (Matt.28:19-20). He is HEAD of the BODY (the church - Eph.1:22-23). As such, we are to submit to Him in everything (Eph.5:23-24). If Jesus were on earth today, we could solve all religious questions by simply asking Him. But since He is not on earth, what then? This leads to our next point.

### *Jesus Has Delegated Authority To His Apostles*

To receive Christ we must receive His apostles as Jesus taught in John 13:20. Please note that the word "apostle" means "one sent." So as Jesus speaks of "whomever I send", He has particular reference to His apostles. The apostles were sent as "ambassadors" for Christ (2 Cor.5:20). Therefore the early church "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42).

To ensure reliability, Jesus promised the Holy Spirit. The Spirit would teach the apostles all things, reminding them of what Jesus spoke to them (Jn.14:26). The Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth (Jn.16:12-13). The Holy Spirit did guide them into "all" truth for Paul said he taught "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). Peter wrote that God "has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Pet.1:3). So, the apostles were given ALL the truth God (and Christ) wanted us to know. If the apostles were on earth today, we could simply ask them to settle religious differences. But again, they are not on earth. What then?

As dealt with in previous articles, following Jesus without denominationalism begins by heeding the call of the gospel. For the Lord "calls" us through His gospel (2 Thess.2:14). As we respond to the call, the Lord Himself adds us to His church (His "called-out" group of people), not a man-made denomination (Acts 2:41,47).

But I also suggested that if we are to be simply Christians, members of the Lord's church as we read about in the New Testament, then we must follow the example of the early church who "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine..." (Acts 2:42).

The importance of this relates very closely to the subject of authority in religion. It is impossible to maintain unity unless we can agree upon a "standard" of authority. This is true in all areas of life. Imagine the confusion if we did not have a standard of authority relating to weights and measures. We could not even agree on the length of a line, the volume of a tank of gasoline, etc. Confusion would reign supreme in the market place if we did not all agree on one standard of authority in regards to weights and measures. An essential key to having unity on any subject is this: WE MUST ACCEPT AND SUBMIT TO THE SAME STANDARD OF AUTHORITY!

This is especially true in matters of religion. If people can agree on the standard of authority in religious matters, unity is possible when we submit to that same standard. Without a standard of authority upon which we all agree, unity is impossible!

What should be the standard of authority for Christ's church? Let's begin with a point with which I am sure all those professing to be Christians can agree.

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## ***Standard Of Authority (Cont.)***

### ***In The New Testament, The Apostles Have Written What Christ Wants Us To Know!***

In the New Testament we have what the apostles were given by the Holy Spirit, as Paul explained in Ephesians 3:1-5. He wrote, so that when we read his writings we can have his same understanding. Peter wrote his epistles that we might always be reminded (2 Pet.1:12-15; 3:1-2).

In the New Testament we have the commandments of the Lord Himself. As Paul made clear in 1 Corinthians 14:37. Peter confirmed, such writings as Paul's were considered Scripture ( 2 Pet.3:15-16). Therefore, when we have questions about what the Lord would have us to do to become united... we don't have to ascend to heaven for an answer, we don't have to ask Jesus personally, nor His apostles...we simply need to turn to the apostles' writing, the New Testament! In the New Testament, the repository of the "apostles' doctrine", is where we can turn to learn the will of Jesus, given through His selected and inspired ambassadors, the apostles. But this raises other questions: Is the New Testament a complete guide for us today? Is it sufficient?

### ***The New Testament Is A Complete, All-Sufficient Guide***

It must be complete, for "the faith" has been revealed "once for all" (Jude 3). "Once for all" literally means "one time for all time." We cannot expect further revelation in the future. The writings of the apostles as collected in the New Testament are all we have, and all we need. Our task, is not to look for further revelation, but to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints"!

According to the apostles themselves, the writings are sufficient. Sufficient to make one complete, furnished unto every good work (2 Tim.3:16-17). They provide all we need to enjoy life and godliness (2 Pet.1:3). By heeding the writings of the apostles we will have the

true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet.1:8-9). An abundant entrance will be supplied into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet.1: 10-11).

We are left with God's providence and His word. As Paul prepared the elders of the church at Ephesus for his departure, he commended them to God and the word of His grace (Acts 20:32). He did not instruct them to appoint apostles to take his place. He did not instruct them to seek further revelation, for Paul had already proclaimed "the whole counsel of God" to them (Acts 20:27). He simply directed them to two things: 1) To God Himself (His Divine Providence), 2) The word of His grace (that word which had been revealed by Paul himself). These two blessings, Paul was confident, were able to do two things: 1) Build them up, 2) Give them an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

The "New Testament," then, is how Christ speaks to us today and He leads us to life everlasting! It is through the writing of the apostles, the "apostles' doctrine", that the Lord speaks and directs His Church! It is the "apostles' doctrine" that is the standard of authority in matters of religion. It is the "apostles' doctrine" in which we must "continue steadfastly"! (Acts 2:42).

There is more to be said about "authority in religion", which we will cover in the next article. But I hope that our attitude is such that what was said about the Thessalonians can also be said of us: "For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe" (1 Thess.2:13).

Is that your attitude toward the "apostles' doctrine"? If so, unity can be achieved with those of the first century church, and with those who honestly and diligently seek the Lord's will today.

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