

The Apostles and NT Authority

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Bible Verse: 1 John 1:1-4
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Well, as we come to God's word this evening, I ask you to turn to the book of 1 John toward the end of your Bibles this evening. There's a text I want to read to set the stage for all of the instruction for this evening. 1 John 1, we'll read the first four verses together.

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life-- 2 the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us-- 3 that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

When John opens this letter, he is setting forth an extended statement of his apostolic authority; he's stating why he has the ability and the authority and the prerogative to speak about the nature of salvation, saving faith, and the truth of Jesus Christ, to those to whom he is reading. John, you'll notice that John is appealing to the fact that he had direct personal experience with the Lord Jesus during the time that he was a disciple of Christ while Christ was on earth. He heard, verse 1, he heard Christ teach. He saw Christ with his own eyes. They looked upon him. They touched him. And therefore they had a direct personal experience with the Lord Jesus that is different and distinct from anything that anyone could truthfully claim today. John is writing as an apostle of Jesus Christ, that goes to the question of why would we listen to what John has to say in 1 John? As stated, frame the question a little bit differently, why must we believe what the Apostle John says in this letter? State the question another way, how is it that John, the writer of this epistle, what is the basis upon which he can interpret Christ and interpret the teaching of Christ to the church for all time? That is a most essential question to be able to answer in a clear and direct way if you are going to have what we are calling a Christian mind. If you are going to think properly, if you are going to have a transformed mind as a believer, you must understand the nature of the apostolic office. Why can John interpret Christ for us? John was one of the apostles. And tonight we're going, if you're taking notes and I encourage you to do so, tonight we're going to talk about the apostles and

New Testament authority. Last time on Sunday, we looked at Christ in New Testament authority and we saw that during his earthly ministry, Jesus Christ prepared for and anticipated the writing of the New Testament Canon after his ascension. He told the apostles that he was going to send the Holy Spirit upon them who would bring to mind everything that he said and guide them in the truth, and we need to understand the role of the apostles in the foundational aspect of New Testament Christianity. And we're going to spend two or three messages on this; tonight is a very important introduction.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones says this, he says, "Do we always realize that the apostles claimed for themselves a unique authority? They asserted it constantly. We need to reconsider the New Testament teaching about the apostles. It was not their own authority, it was the authority they had derived and received from Christ. They did not speak as ordinary men, they spoke as apostles."

Now this is such a fundamental question: who is it that has the authority to reveal and declare truth from God since the ascension of Jesus Christ? In some ways, there is no more important question than that. Can anyone stand up in a charismatic prayer service and say, "Thus saith the Lord," and legitimately give new truth from God to those that hear? Is that legitimate? Can the Catholic Church add to doctrine through their teaching magisterium? Can they add to truth and establish new doctrines and can the Pope speak infallibly when he sits ex cathedra and makes pronouncements that are binding on the conscience and carry the authority that what he says must be believed and obeyed? Does he have that authority? The answer is, no, he doesn't, but that's for another time. We're not simply talking about the teaching office of the church today, we're not simply talking about what we're doing here this evening where a man opens up the Bible and teaches and explains what it means by what it says, that's not the same thing as what the apostles were doing as they delivered New Testament Scripture to us. The apostles were speaking with an authority that must be believed and must be obeyed in a way that is different and distinct from anything else.

Who has the right, in other words, who has the right to declare truth about Christ and salvation? Or who is the appointed agent of revelation of truth about Christ and salvation? Listen to me carefully, beloved, I'll give you a one sentence answer to that question and then we'll spend, you know, three or four messages explaining why it must be the case. Who has the right to reveal truth about Christ and salvation since his ascension? The New Testament answer to that question is this: only the apostles do. Only the apostles do. Only the 12 apostles do. The 12 minus Judas plus Matthias added in Acts 1 and then the Apostle Paul to the Gentiles, they are the unique authorized representatives of Jesus Christ to the church, and since their passing there is no more apostles. There is no such thing as apostolic succession despite the fact that many religions try to build their authority on that. There is no such thing as apostolic succession. There is no New Testament instruction on how that authority would be transferred, and it's because the authority was unique and it was limited to them and them alone. That's a truth of massive, massive implications. If this sounds new to you, if this is new teaching to you, I want to assure you and encourage you to apply yourselves to what is to come because this has

just incalculable consequences for the entire nature of truth and of the New Testament Church.

Jesus Christ uniquely and exclusively commissioned the apostles before his ascension, and what I'm doing here is I'm just giving you an overview summary of it, and then we'll go back and we'll justify everything that we're saying in the, you know, in the days to come, including this evening. The apostles have unique authority. They have non-repeatable authority. They have non-delegable authority, and this is so crucial for us to understand.

The word "apostle," our English word "apostle" comes from a Greek verb, a Greek root *apostello*, and that verb has the idea, it means "to send." An apostle is one who is sent. And it stresses, the word "apostle" stresses that the sender commissioned the person who is sent so that the apostle goes out with an authority that is given to him by the one who is sent out. And we'll look at examples of that in future messages, but for now you just need to be of a mind that the word "apostle" has the idea of someone who is sent on a mission and it carries with it the idea that there was an authoritative sender who commissioned them to the work that they undertake.

Now in New Testament studies, the word "apostle" is used in a technical sense that is in connection with the 12, and we're going to look at, I believe it's four principles this evening to help you understand their unique authority and how we know and receive their authority today. And what I want to lay out for you here is just the idea of a commission with authority. Okay, keep that in mind, one who is sent on a commission with authority, and I find it helpful to think about it this way, to think about it in a chain of command. Those of you that served in the military, thank you for your service. I did not serve in the military, but I know just enough to know that the chain of command is very, very important in the idea of military discipline. Well, we can think, we can borrow an idea like that to help us see the position of the apostles and to realize the nature of their authority, and I think, I personally find that as I said on Sunday, I find these doctrines about the apostles to be very stimulating, very encouraging, very exciting to understand that the apostles' authority, the chain of command by which the apostles spoke with the authority that we saw in 1 John, the chain of command flows, beloved, straight from the throne of God. These men were not self-appointed. They were not men who took up their pen because they had human insights that they wanted to share with others. No, they spoke with a unique, non-delegable authority that comes from God himself.

And so here's how we're going to structure it this evening. First of all, understand, and you think about these things and they're so obvious when it's just set forth before you, there's nothing difficult about this, first of all, our first point for this evening is going to be that authority rests with God. Stated differently, God himself has all and final authority in and of himself. Authority rests with God, that will be our first point for this evening. Our second point for this evening will be that authority rests in Jesus Christ. Authority rests in Jesus Christ, and we'll look at a few things to establish that beyond any dispute. Thirdly, we will see that authority rests in the apostles. So God, Christ, the

apostles, and then, fourthly and finally this evening, what we're going to see is that authority rests in the Scriptures. Authority rests in the Scriptures. So you have God with all authority. He sent his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, with all authority on earth. Christ assigned authority to the 12 apostles. And the apostles then wrote authoritative Scripture that is binding upon the church today. There's a chain of command. It's a direct chain of custody of the authority of God that goes from the throne of God ending in the apostolic Scriptures and ceasing there. There is a reason why we hold to Sola Scriptura, a message that I'm going to preach as part of this series on how to know the Bible is true. And so four principles for this evening that I've already outlined for you, the first two will go by rather quickly.

First of all, that authority rests in God. Now I could just assume this point but I'll take just a couple of minutes to just give you a couple of Scriptures to base your thinking on. You think about God whom we know exists. We know that God exists because we've established that, we established that in the earlier parts of our series. We know that God exists because he has revealed himself. He has made himself known. He's made himself known in creation. He's made himself known in the Canon of Scripture. He has made himself known in the principle of human conscience. He has made himself known in the person of Jesus Christ. He has made himself known in the reality of the conversion of his people. The existence of God is established conclusively in the mind of God in his testimony to man. Now the very nature, the very being of God, then, is that he is the one who has all authority. God is the sovereign King of the universe, and he had all authority before creation began, he has never lost authority, he has authority throughout the whole course of human history, and he will have full authority when he brings human history to an end. And consequently, beloved, that is our starting point. God, whom we know exists, God has all authority and authority rests in him. As a result of that, any legitimate authority traces its source back to the living God. God has all authority, he establishes structures of human authority and human institutions which mediate his authority, but all authority finds its source, all legitimate authority ultimately finds its source in God himself, and there is no true authority apart from him.

Let me give you just a couple of Scriptures. Psalm 103:19 says, "The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all." In the NASB it reads "His sovereignty reigns over all," words to that effect. The word "kingdom" and "sovereignty" are used to translate the underlying Hebrew term. In Romans 13:1, the Apostle Paul says, "there is no authority except from God," and that's in the context of calling Christians to obedience to human government. So authority rests in God. There is no authority except from God. There's no one that has an independent authority independent of God, there's no one that has a rival authority against God. He is alone in his authority. He is holy. He is separate. He is unique. He is King over everything and he holds ultimate authority, and therefore God and God alone is the dispenser of human authority.

Now at this point, it might be helpful to give just a brief definition of the term authority since we're staking so much on that term here today. Authority, just to give you a very simple definition in the context of what we're talking about here in biblical truth and all

of that, authority is the right or the prerogative, authority is the right to command belief or action. Simple enough. I'm not trying to be exhaustive, give a technical lexical definition, just to give you a working sense of what we're talking about authority is the right to command belief or action, okay? Now who then has the authority, this is an ultimate question, beloved, and I mean, this is an ultimate question; there are few questions if any that are more fundamental than this question: who has the authority to command us to believe and to behave in a certain way in the way that he determines best? Who has the ultimate authority? Who has the final authority to command belief and behavior? And the biblical answer is that only God does. Only God does. And legitimate authority, parental authority and children must obey their parents, parents have that authority because it's derived from God who established the institution of the family. An employer has a right to command certain behaviors and call for obedience from his employees because God has established that institution, and you read about that often in the New Testament. But when it comes to the matter of commanding belief, of establishing a way of salvation, of establishing eternal laws for the soul that must be obeyed upon penalty of eternal judgment for a single act of rebellion, only God has that authority. And so authority is the right to command belief or action. There is no authority except from God. We find authority rests in God and in God alone, okay?

Now secondly, with that basic principle in mind, let's move on to our second point that authority rests in Christ. Authority rests in Christ. And when we think about God before creation, before all time, God existing in the blessedness of the ineffable Godhead, the Triune Godhead, and all authority resting with him, and all power resting with him, understand that in human time and space, God manifested his authority uniquely in the Lord Jesus Christ. Uniquely in the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord, our blessed Lord, is the second person of the eternal and blessed Trinity. Jesus Christ has co-equal authority with the Father and the Spirit because they all share the single, indivisible, divine essence. And so Christ shares in the authority of God as a member of the blessed Trinity, and thus when he came to earth, he came manifesting the authority of God, the character of God, revealing God in human flesh. And the four gospels are written, in part, to help us understand that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of God. He is the divine appointed Messiah.

Now that's a claim of massive proportions to claim that Jesus Christ or that Jesus is the Christ, that he is the Messiah. That's not a claim that can be lightly made, that you are the anointed one of God. And so, actually, if you turn back to the gospel of John just to give you, this would really be better as a summary at the end rather than an introduction, but that's okay. John 20, the Apostle John says this in John 20:30 and 31, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." These signs were attesting miracles that Jesus did during his earthly ministry. They were miracles that showed his authority over different realms that we're going to look at. Jesus exercised his authority over different realms of the spiritual and natural realm which showed that he had a unique authority that belonged to no one else. And John said, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "I wrote down the things that have preceded in the prior 20 chapters," so to speak, "I

wrote these things so that you would understand know and believe that Jesus is the appointed Messiah of God and that all authority rests with him." And so that's the goal of the gospels is to set forth Christ before us so that we would believe in him, recognize his unique authority, submit to him, believe in him, repent of sin, and receive him as he is presented to us in the gospel as our prophet, priest and king. So all authority rests with God, and Christ is sent by the Father into the world to manifest and to reveal God in human flesh, and thereby display his authority.

Now, tonight I just want to very quickly, this could be a a complete independent message of its own, I just want to show you how the gospel show us at least five different ways that Christ displayed authority on the earth. This authority to command belief and action belongs to Christ uniquely, and he demonstrated that he had authority in the spiritual realm to command belief and behavior by the way that he exercised authority over things on earth. And we're just going to cover this briefly tonight; we'll cover this more thoroughly in future weeks and months when we consider how to know that Jesus is Lord. This brief survey here over the next few minutes is only to stimulate your thinking in the context of dealing with the authority of the apostles. So be ready to write quickly here.

One way that Christ manifested his authority was that he taught with authority. He taught with authority in a way that was recognized by those who heard him while he was on earth. In Matthew 7:28 and 29, you do not need to turn there, I'll just read this to you. Matthew 7 at the end of the chapter we read this, "when Jesus finished these sayings," the Sermon on the Mount that he delivered on one occasion found in Matthew 5 through 7, "when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes." They were used to teachers quoting other authorities, other human authorities, and teaching like that. Jesus Christ came and said, "You've heard it said that such and such is true, but I say to you..." Six times in Matthew 5 he says, "but I say to you." He speaks on his own authority. He doesn't need to quote others to support the authority of what he teaches and the crowds who heard him at the time recognized that, and there was something about the manner and the instruction and the content and his demeanor as he taught that astonished them and they said, "We've never heard a man speak like this before." That was often said of Christ in his ministry, words to that effect, "We've never heard a man speak like this." The very nature of his teaching manifested his authority and set him apart from all of the other teachers that they had. Christ taught with authority, and that is one way that we know that authority rests in him.

Secondly, as we look at how Christ manifested his authority, as you read the gospels you see that Christ healed diseases and he cast out demons. He healed diseases and cast out demons. Just write down the verse reference and then I'll read it to you. Mark 1:34. Mark 1:34 we read that Jesus, "healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him." Jesus, unlike the charismatic charlatans of today, Jesus healed immediately things of observable, verifiable affliction. You remember how he told the lame man to get up off of his bed, pick up his pallet and walk, man by the pool who had not walked for his 38 years

or so and Jesus commands him to get up and walk and he does. He exercised, beloved, he exercised direct authority over the realm of physical human disease and cured it in a way that no one else could do and had ever done, and therefore distinguished himself as one having authority. He cast out supernatural beings. He cast out demons. He controlled them. He commanded them, told them what to do, and they had no choice but to obey and do what he said. And so in the physical realm, Christ manifested a unique authority that vindicated that God's authority resided in him. He exercised authority over the spiritual realm, showing again that God's unique authority resided in him in the person of Christ.

So we join two things together there, but we see Christ, how do we know that all authority rests in Christ? He taught with authority, he healed diseases and cast out demons. Thirdly, Jesus Christ forgave sin. Jesus Christ forgave sin. Now the next two texts that we're going to look at are just a little bit longer and so I'll have you turn to those so that you can read along with me. Mark 2. Mark 2, beginning in verse 9. Mark 2, beginning in verse 9, you remember the story I've already alluded to it in a general sense. Jesus was teaching in Capernaum, many were gathered together. Verse 2, there was no room to get to him, not even at the door, and some men came and they had a paralytic that they were carrying. In verse 4, they could not get near Jesus because of the crowd, so they removed the roof above him, the soil roof that would have been above him. They made an opening and they lowered the bed on which the paralytic lay. And in verse 5, "when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.' Now some of the scribes were sitting there," verse 6, "questioning in their hearts, 'Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?'" And that word "can," who can forgive sins, is implying who has the authority to forgive sins against God except God alone? No one has that authority. Only God can forgive sin. In verse 8, Jesus didn't back down from the challenge, instead, he pressed the point. Verse 8, "immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, 'Why do you question these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk?'" He said you can say either sentence with equal ease, but how do you know that there is authority behind the words that are spoken? How do you know that it carries the right of command and the right of declaration? So he goes on and says anybody could say those words. The problem with forgiving sins is it's in an unseen realm where you can't observe it with your human senses. And so Jesus addresses that objection and that concern and manifests his authority. Verse 10, "But that you may know that the Son of Man," here it is, "has authority on earth to forgive sins"--he said to the paralytic-- 'I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.'" And this man who could not walk, verse 12, got up, "he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We never saw anything like this!'" This is new to human experience to see a man heal a paralyzed man by his spoken word alone, tell him to get up and walk out, and he did. And that was only secondary to the greater reality that Christ is asserting the authority to forgive sin so that the sign, the miracle of healing a man with the spoken word established his authority over the physical realm and the point is that that authority over the physical realm shows that he has authority in the spiritual realm to be the one to forgive sin. And so Christ forgave sin, and they knew it and they were astonished at the sight of what they saw.

Fourthly, Christ raised the dead. Christ raised the dead. Look at Luke 7. Luke 7. We could have gone and, I think it's John 11 and looked at the resurrection of Lazarus. "Lazarus, come forth." He'd been dead for four days in the tomb, and Jesus calls him forth. But we'll look at Luke 7 for this evening, 11 through 16. Now in Luke 7:11, "Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, 'Do not weep.' Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still." They were carrying the body through the village. And Jesus said, "'Young man, I say to you, arise.' And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has arisen among us!' and 'God has visited his people!' And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country." He raised the dead.

Now, beloved, nobody can do that. No one can do that. Oh, I know that there are, you know, third-hand claims that charismatics make from things that are happening somewhere in the bowels of Africa but none of it's true. If they really had the authority to raise the dead like some of them claim that they do, do it in front of us with the cameras on. Go to a cemetery and call someone out of the grave like Jesus called Lazarus out of the grave. Do that. Do you know what? If they could do that, they would do that. Do you know why they would do that if they could do that? It's because they'd make a fortune. They would make a fortune if they could do that in a verifiable way. But instead they rely on these shadowy, unverifiable, nonfalsifiable stories to lead gullible people astray. If they could raise the dead, beloved, they'd be out doing it everywhere because they would make billions. As it is they make tens of millions with false claims, false signs. You can only imagine what they would do if they could really do it. They don't do it because they can't do it. We'll address that down the road also.

Jesus exercised authority over the realm of the dead. This shows that he has the authority of God. All authority resides in him, authority over human disease, authority over demons, authority over sin, authority over death, authority in its teaching. And that's not all. Turn a page or two in your Bibles to Luke 8. Luke 8 in verse 24. Luke 8, and we'll start in verse 22 just to give the full narrative account here. "One day he got into a boat with his disciples," Luke 8:22, "One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, 'Let us go across to the other side of the lake.' So they set out, and as they sailed he fell asleep." His humanity side-by-side with his deity. Scripture describes this is an effortless way, two natures, one person. But he fell asleep, "And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger. And they went and woke him, saying, 'Master, Master, we are perishing!' And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm. He said to them, 'Where is your faith?' And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, 'Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?'"

He controlled nature. There are just so many simple ways to picture this to contrast our human impotence with what Scripture describes about the absolute authority of Jesus Christ. Have you ever been to the ocean, see the waves coming in? Stand on the beach, look out at them, lift your hands and say, "I command thee to stop," and watch what happens. Go out and speak to the thunder, the lightning and the thunder of a Midwest thunderstorm and say, "Cease, be still," and watch what happens as the storm continues because it does not heed your voice. It does not obey you. Beloved, contrast that with the person of Christ speaking to a raging sea saying, in effect, "That's enough. Stop." And the billowing waves turn to a flat sea of glass. That is breathtaking, frightening authority. We say frightening because that's how the disciples responded. Look at it there in verse 25, "they were afraid, and they marveled." They realized that they were in the presence of deity. They went from being afraid of the storm to having a deeper fear transferred to the one who had authority over the storm.

Back in Luke 5, you don't need to turn there, Jesus performed another miracle with the waters. You remember they'd been fishing all night and Jesus tells him to let down the net and they'll catch fish and Peter says, "Lord, we've been fishing. We're professionals here. We've been fishing all night, haven't caught a thing, but at your bidding, we'll let the net down and, you know, I don't wanna, I just want to warn you we've done this and there's nothing there." Verse 6 of Luke 5, they lowered the nets and "they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink." What was Peter's response? Here's the point. Peter's response when he saw all of this and he saw that manifestation of divine authority, the authority of absolute deity manifested before him, he fell down before Jesus saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." They feared Jesus as he manifested authority over the elements to him. Peter, seeing that manifestation of authority earlier in Luke 5, realized that he was in the presence of holy deity. He was convicted of sin as a result and he fell down at Christ and worshiped and said, "I'm not worthy to be in your presence. I see who you are and I should not be here. You should not be with me and I should not be with you because you are holy with authority and I am a sinful fallen creature. I have no business in your presence. Depart from me." But Jesus said to him, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." So Christ showed mercy and kindness to him even in that supernatural display of his divine authority.

Now beloved that brief overview there, these signs that we have looked at show the authority of Christ over all things seen and unseen, physical and spiritual. It is a comprehensive authority over all. And those who saw it at the time, recognized it and responded to him. They acknowledged the authority of his teaching, "We've seen amazing things today. Depart from me, I'm a sinful man." They all saw it. It was manifest to them, for God made it manifest to them. So Christ has all authority.

Now as we build a Christian mind, you and I are in a different position compared to those earthly witnesses of the earthly ministry of Christ. We have a different situation. We live after that. We live after he walked on the earth and did all of these things. How are we to know? How are we to receive these things with authority? How are we to know that these

things are true? This is a problem. Christ is not with us now. He's ascended up into heaven and we cannot see him. We cannot observe him. So how do we know anything about him with authority? He did not write any books of his own. He did not record his own words, his own deeds. So how do you and I, in this day and age, know anything reliable about him whatsoever because his earthly life is done. We can't transport back in time to see it with our own eyes. So how do we know anything reliable about him?

Well, beloved, that brings us to our third and crucial point here this evening is that authority rests in the apostles. Authority rests in the apostles, and oh, is this a dear, dear doctrine for our souls. All authority belongs to God, part of being God. All authority belongs to Christ who manifested the authority of God when he was on earth. And so all authority, Christ has all authority and we'll see that stated by him in his own words, in just a moment. Beloved, watch this: because all authority belongs to Christ, he has the prerogative to delegate that authority to whomever he wishes. He can delegate authority as he sees fit and no one can challenge that because it's his authority to do with as he pleases. And as you study the Scriptures, particularly in the New Testament, what you find is this, is that by divine prerogative that same Jesus conferred his authority on the 12 apostles. They have spiritual authority directly from Jesus Christ in order to exercise the ministries that was given to them. This is essential to understanding New Testament Christianity. This is essential to protecting yourself from false claims to spiritual authority and new revelation. The things that we are discussing here this evening are of foundational significance. As I said earlier, this is a matter of first principles when it comes to New Testament Christianity and, again, we're going to look at this over two or three messages, not all of it can fit into the time we have remaining here this evening.

How are we to approach, how are we to think about the authority that the apostles received from the Lord Jesus? Well, we'll go through this and get as far as we can in the time remaining. First of all, understand that, you know, the third point here, authority rests in the apostles, how do we know that? How was that manifested? How did that transfer of authority, that delegation, better stated, delegation of authority from Christ to them occur? Well, first of all, Jesus chose them. Jesus chose the 12 apostles and he chose them to uniquely be his representatives on earth.

Mark 3 and that word "uniquely" is essential to it all. It is essential to it all, and I use uniquely advisedly because when you understand that it's a unique authority, you're not misled into following men who claim to be apostles or in apostolic succession today. So many people get deceived and go down that path because they have not given adequate heed to the clear teaching of Scripture on these matters that we are discussing in our day right now.

Jesus chose the 12 to uniquely be his representatives on earth. Mark 3:13. Mark 3 beginning in verse 13, and all I can do is just touch on it. Jesus "went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve." That number is significant. He didn't make a general appointment to the crowds, he chose 12. "He appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons."

Jesus appointed 12 men, that they, those 12 might be with him in a unique way, that he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons. Jesus has authority to teach, to declare the truth from God, and now he is delegating authority to these 12 that he chose, and the subsequent narrative names those 12 as happens in parallel passages of Scripture. He wanted them to be with him. He sent them out to preach. He wanted them to have authority to cast out demons, the same kind of authority that he did. Now beloved, understand the apostles were more than the buddies of Jesus. Yes, they had a close, intimate relationship with him, but they had a unique purpose in the revelatory program of God that Jesus is establishing. They had unique authority, authority given to the 12 not given to the crowds and as it pertains to the teaching and the supernatural signs that would vindicate their own teaching in days to come. Jesus chose the 12 to fulfill his own sovereign will.

You don't need to turn there, but when he was speaking to the 12 minus Judas at this point in John 15 on the night prior to his crucifixion, he says, "You did not choose me but I chose you and appointed you so that you should go and bear fruit." In that small room, in that small upper room in this crucial transitional evening at the end of his earthly ministry as he is about to go to the cross and bear the sins of all who would ever believe in him, Jesus looks, as it were, around the table and says, "You didn't choose me. You're here by my appointment. You're here by my will. I chose you. I appointed you for a purpose that you would go out and bear fruit."

So Jesus chose these men in a way that he didn't choose others, and so he chose the apostles, first of all. Secondly, as we talk about the apostles and New Testament authority, and that authority rests in the apostles, how do we know that the apostles and the apostles alone have authority? Secondly, Jesus commissioned them. Jesus commissioned them. After his resurrection, Jesus commissioned the apostles to – oh, this is so important, beloved – Jesus commissioned the apostles to speak in his absence with the very authority of Christ himself. Jesus chose them and then he gave them authority to speak on his behalf. As you know, as an attorney has authority to speak on behalf of his client in a courtroom proceeding, in an even greater way the apostles had authority to speak on behalf of Christ because Christ gave them that authority. They did not take it to themselves, he gave them that authority, and we're going to look at a few passages here now.

Matthew 28. Matthew 28:16 after his resurrection. "Now the eleven disciples," Matthew 28:16, "the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.'" This is what we're talking about. "All authority, in heaven and earth, it belongs to me." He's speaking to the 11 and now he gives them the command, "You eleven, you go therefore and you make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Jesus asserts his authority and then he gives the commission to the disciples to go out and to teach in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They were under divine commission, divine command to teach what

they had heard from him. They were men on a mission. They were men under authority. They were men assigned to do a task in the name of Christ himself, in the name of the Triune God himself. So they were commissioned, and we carry out the evangelistic and teaching aspect of apostolic ministry, but we do it in a derivative way, not with the direct authority that was given to the apostles.

Look over at the gospel of Luke 24. Luke 24, and as you're turning there, you can put your finger at Acts 1 also. In verse 44 we read this as he speaks to the disciples again, "he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.'" In other words, "You are the witnesses who are going to go out and proclaim repentance for the forgiveness of sins in my name to all nations." In verse 49 he promises the equipping power so that they're able to carry out the task. Verse 49, "behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." "You're to go out and be my witnesses."

Look at Acts 1, the opening of the book. Acts 1:1 and 2. I realize we're going kind of quick here. Acts 1:1, "In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up," by the way, Acts written by Luke, the same person who wrote the gospel that we were just reading from, Luke being a close associate of the Apostle Paul. Verse 2, "until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen." He assigned the apostles. And then verses 7 and 8, "He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.'" You are going to receive power from the Holy Spirit. Following the logic from the beginning of the book, Jesus chose apostles, he gave them their assignment and he made provision that the Holy Spirit would come upon them in order for them to carry out what he had commanded them to do.

In a similar but a distinct manner with the Apostle Paul, look at Acts 26. Acts 26. Jesus chose these men. He commissioned these men. And you remember when Jesus stopped Paul on the road to Damascus, Paul here in Acts 26 is describing to the authorities what happened on that day which was now years in the past as he is speaking here. Verse 14, "when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you.'" I'm appointing you as my servant and the witness to these things. Verse 17, "delivering you from your people and from the

Gentiles--to whom I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." Jesus chose Paul, he commissioned Paul and gave him power in order to carry out the commission just as the same way that he had done with the 11 after his resurrection. As you read the book of Acts, you see how the apostles founded the early church. Jesus chose them. He commissioned them. And beloved, what he was doing was he was giving them the authority to speak on his behalf. They had full authority to speak on his behalf.

Now finally, the Holy Spirit empowered them. I alluded to this on Sunda, so I won't turn to these texts. But Jesus sent the Holy Spirit upon them. You read about that, the history of that in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost. He had promised the Spirit to them in John 14, 15 and 16, and the purpose of the Holy Spirit, the ministry of the Spirit in the life of the apostles was this: he quickened their memory to recall the teaching of Christ. He guided their words so that they transmitted the history and interpretation of Christ without error in the New Testament books as we have them today. Beloved, not a church council some centuries after the writings were made, but the Holy Spirit himself was the guarantee that the apostles were trustworthy in what they said. Again, Martyn Lloyd-Jones says this, "Christ enlightens and reveals his will and teaching to these apostles. He endows them with a unique authority, fills them with the needed ability and power, and gives them the teaching that is essential to the well-being of the church and God's people." Christ chose the apostles, he commissioned them, he empowered them, and in the book of Acts and in the epistles you read what they did and what they taught with divine authority.

Now in some ways, in some ways as we just think through this step by step, we're faced with the same difficulty, the same question that we had about Christ. Christ is not here with us physically so we can't observe him with our own eyes like John did in 1 John 1:1 through 4. We can't see him. In like manner, someone might say, but those apostles are all gone. They were all martyred with the exception of John who was exiled to Patmos. They're gone. How does that authority and that commission that they received, how does their authority help us today? How do we know that we have apostolic authority today? Now, the fact that this is an important question is shown by the fact that so many different groups either say that they have modern-day apostles now, or that they have a line of succession going back to the apostles, there's this intrinsic awareness that somehow we need the authority of the apostles resting upon a ministry in order to give it validity. What I've described just now are false claims to that authority but it does illustrate the fact that this matter of apostolic authority, having authority directly from Christ, is a matter of grave significance otherwise people wouldn't waste their time on it.

How does the authority of the apostles help us today? Now we come full circle to the theme of these set of messages, how to know the Bible is true. How does the authority of the apostles help us today? Point number 4 here: Scripture speaks with apostolic authority. Scripture speaks with apostolic authority and again, I just remind you we're laying out, we're outlining some things this evening, there's much more to come about it. I am not at all pretending to be exhaustive in the treatment of the subject here tonight, just giving an overview so you see the chain of command. All authority rests with God.

Authority rests with Christ. Authority rests with the apostles. And now Scripture speaks with apostolic authority. Beloved, this is beautiful and the wisdom of God is just astonishing. The apostolic men are gone but the apostolic writings, they abide. The apostolic writings are with us. Apostolic authority is preserved and contained and expressed in the New Testament as the apostles wrote, or their close associates under the direction and supervision of the apostles. Apostolic authority is preserved in the New Testament. And in the New Testament, beloved, Jesus Christ himself speaks through his apostles. When you read the New Testament, you are reading the word of Christ because you are reading what his divinely appointed, authorized representatives said on his behalf and the apostles made this clear multiple multiple times in their writings.

Look at the book of 1 Corinthians 14. 1 Corinthians 14. As you're turning there just a little side tangent introduction to what we're about to say. Some of you may have red letter Bibles, and if you do, that's fine. I don't have any problem with that. Publishers make a decision to print the words of Christ in red and they stand out distinct from the rest of the Bible. This is not a hill worth dying on, but that is a misleading practice because the words of the apostles have equal authority. The red letter suggests that there's more authority, there's something more important about the words of Jesus than the words of the apostle. That's not a right way to look at Scripture because Christ appointed the apostles to speak on his behalf. They were speaking with his divine authority. He commanded them to do what they did and to say what they said, and they wrote under the inspiration of the Spirit of Christ, guiding them to make sure that they were expressing the very word of God, the very word of Christ, so that there is no diminishment in authority, accuracy or truthfulness between the words of Christ and the words of the apostles found in the New Testament. That is essential for you to understand so that you do not diminish the authority of God's word by pitting it against itself. No, in fact, the apostles made it plain that that was not the case.

In 1 Corinthians 14:37, the Apostle Paul says, 1 Corinthians 14:37, "If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord." That is astonishing, an astonishing assertion of authority. Paul tells the church at Corinth, "What I'm writing to you is what the Lord commands." There is no distinction, no diminishment there. Verse 38, "If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized." You must recognize the authority, the unique authority of the apostles or you're not a Christian.

Look at 1 Thessalonians turning a few pages further, deeper into your New Testament. Over Ephesians and Colossians you come to 1 Thessalonians 2:13 and what Paul means by this is distinct from anything that man can rightfully claim today. When we say, "Thus saith the Lord," we'd better be saying and look at this chapter and verse so we're pointing people to biblical authority. Someone saying, "Thus saith the Lord," and adding something to the Bible is a blasphemous denial of what Christ established so that his church would know his word and his shepherding presence among them. 1 Thessalonians 2:13, "And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us," Paul is saying, when you received our teaching, "you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at

work in you believers." Paul commends Thessalonians. He says, "I thank God for his work in your hearts, and his work in your heart is shown by this, when you heard my teaching when I was in your midst, you received it not as simply a mere human instruction, you received it as an authoritative word from God himself." Paul could say that because he was an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Turn further back in your Bibles past the book of Hebrews to the letter of 2 Peter. 2 Peter 3. 2 Peter 3:1 and 2. "This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that," here's what I want you to remember, "that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior," remember what the Lord and Savior commanded you, and how did that command come to you? It came "through your apostles." The commandment of Christ through the apostles. The apostles being the vessels through which Christ spoke to the church and now we have their writings, we have their teaching preserved for us in the New Testament.

Over in verse 15, 2 Peter 3, "count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures." The word "Scripture" indicating the word of God. Peter alludes to the writings of the Apostle Paul and he says Paul is writing and speaking as do the other Scriptures and Paul's writings are put on an equal plane with the other Scriptures.

One last one 1 John 4. 1 John 4. Who you listen to, beloved, as the authoritative voice of God, what you listen to, what you esteem, what you defer to, what you obey, what you recognize as the word of God is a definitive expression of the reality or the falsehood of your salvation. The apostles leave no room for any other conclusion. 1 John 4:4 John says to his readers, "Little children, you are from God and have overcome them," they've overcome the false teachers that were plaguing them and which prompted his letter. "You are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them." Now watch what happens. In verse 4 he says "you," speaking to the readers. Verse 5 he uses "they," third person, and addresses the false teachers that had been troubling them. Now in verse 6 he uses a different pronoun that changes everything. He says, "We are from God," meaning "we of the apostolic circle." There's the "you," the true believers in the church, there's the "they," everyone else out in the world. Well, who's love to be "we"? It's the apostles. It's the apostolic circle of which John was the last one. We, going back to the first four verses, we who saw this, we who heard this, we who touched them, we are the ones from God. He is asserting apostolic authority that is unique and distinct from anyone else so that he says, "whoever knows God listens to us." Whoever knows God listens to the apostles, the true appointed apostles during the lifetime of Christ. "Whoever is not from God does not listen to us." Someone who disregards, diminishes apostolic authority, John says they don't know God and that's a mark of one who is lost. He says, "By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of

error." There's the "you" in the church, the "they" in the world, and the "we" of the apostolic circle, who I remind you, heard Christ, saw Christ, looked on him, touched him, and now what they had seen and heard they proclaimed to the rest.

So beloved, how do we know the Bible is true? We know it by the authority of Jesus Christ. We know it by the authority of the apostles that he appointed. And in the apostolic text, Jesus Christ speaks to his people as the Savior of sinners. In the apostolic text, faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ, Romans 10, in the apostolic text, Christ appeals to sinners and invites them to salvation in a free, loving offer to come to him and to be saved. He speaks through the Scripture. It's the word that creates faith, the word and the word alone. In the apostolic text, Jesus Christ himself feeds and sustains his church. In the apostolic text, Jesus Christ feeds and sustains you through what the apostles have recorded about his life, teaching and their interpretation of it, and in Revelation, the things yet to come. Beloved, our faith has a sure foundation, one that is built on the apostles, Ephesians 2:20. As I promised you, we will develop this theme more in the days to come.

Let's bow together in prayer.

Gracious Father, thank you for the word of God, the written word of God in the 66 and no more books of the Bible. What a precious gift that tells us in a reliable, true way, the truth about Jesus Christ and the saving gospel by which our souls must be saved. Thank you for appointing the apostles. Thank you for empowering them, commissioning them. We are the beneficiaries. We believe today, Father, through the word that the apostles gave. What an amazing thought to contemplate that their word from 2,000 years ago in chronology is the same word that leads us to believe in Christ today. Help us to grasp the implications, the ramifications and the magnificent reality of these things that we might be established rightly in the faith, that you might build in us a truly Christian mind. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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