

“FROM HEAVEN OR FROM MEN?”

INTRODUCTION

A. Matthew 21:23-27

Jesus was once asked, “By what authority are you doing these things?” In His reply, Jesus acknowledged that religious authority comes either “from heaven or from men”. This lesson identifies false standards of religious authority that come from men.

- B.** It is not sufficient to merely be aware that counterfeits exist. Examining the counterfeits helps us to recognize them when they are used.

I. INTELLECTUALISM

It is not unusual that a person will rely on what a particular preacher, philosopher, psychologist, or scientist has said, rather than on the word of God.

A. 1st Timothy 6:20-21

What men often regard as “knowledge” is what leads them away from God, not toward Him.

B. 1st Corinthians 1:18-25; 2:1-6; 3:18-19

The world poorly esteems the wisdom of God, but what might be called foolish with God is truly greater than the wisdom of men.

II. CONSCIENCE

The adage “Let your conscience be your guide” is a dangerous philosophy in religion.

A. Titus 1:15

The conscience is subject to being defiled.

B. Acts 23:1; 24:16; 26:9

Paul never violated his conscience, even when he persecuted Christ.

C. 1st Corinthians 4:4

Paul knew very well that he could not be his own judge.

D. 2nd Corinthians 10:12

Man must never use himself as a measure of righteousness.

E. Proverbs 14:12

This plot has been carried out in nearly every sitcom ever aired. The woman insists the man stop to ask for directions, but he refuses, insisting he knows the way, but inevitably gets lost. But it's so much more serious when it comes to spiritual matters. Just doing what feels right is highly destructive.

F. Jeremiah 10:23

As a responsible parent will not allow a small child to cross a street or parking lot without holding the hand of an adult, so we cannot make it safely to heaven without God leading us.

G. Jeremiah 17:9

Feelings are not reliable!

H. Proverbs 3:5

The concepts of trusting God and leaning on ourselves are mutually exclusive.

I. Isaiah 55:8-9

People should not rely on their own understanding, but God's, because God's ways are superior.

III. MAJORITY

Oftentimes, people are drawn to a certain religious persuasion because it is popular and shy away from another because of how few practice it.

A. 1st Peter 3:18-20; 2nd Peter 2:5

The way of salvation has always been the way of the few, as in the days of Noah, when the whole earth perished in the flood, except for eight souls.

B. Luke 13:23-27; Matthew 7:13-14

Jesus was asked directly, "*Lord, are there few who are saved?*" In His straightforward reply He answered affirmatively.

IV. PARENTS

Many practice the religion they do, not because of personal conviction, but because their parents did so.

A. Ephesians 6:1

Children are required to obey their parents, but only *“in the Lord.”*

B. Matthew 10:37

To love parents more than the Lord is sinful.

C. Galatians 1:13-14

Paul was so enthusiastic for the religious traditions of his parents, that he persecuted the church.

D. Ezekiel 18:1-20

Children do not inherit either their parents' wickedness or their righteousness.

V. TRADITION

Many practice their religion based on centuries' worth of tradition, regardless of the scriptures.

A. Matthew 15:1-9

Jesus observed that many transgress God's commands because of religious tradition, saying that it is useless to worship Him and teach human tradition at the same time.

B. Colossians 2:8

Paul warned against being cheated by tradition.

C. 1st Peter 1:17-19

Peter noted that Christ's blood, not tradition, redeems the soul.

1. What affect can so-called knowledge have on the faith of some (1st Timothy 6:20-21)?
2. How does God's wisdom compare to man's (1st Corinthians 1:18-25; Proverbs 3:5; Isaiah 55:8-9)?
3. Is it possible to have a clear conscience while doing wrong (Acts 23:1; 24:16; 26:9; Titus 1:15)?
4. Is it wise to use oneself as the standard of judgment (2nd Corinthians 10:12)?
5. What is the result of doing what feels right (Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 14:12)?
6. Does the fact that everyone else is doing something make it right (Matthew 7:13-14)?
7. How many were saved in the days of Noah (1st Peter 3:20; 2nd Peter 2:5)?
8. How should love for family compare to love for God (Matthew 10:37)?
9. Does God accept worship based on tradition (Matthew 15:1-9; Colossians 2:8)?