

LESSON FOUR

THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

A. THE CHURCH COMMISSIONED.

Scriptural Reference:

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14).

The importance of the commission can hardly be over-emphasized. Jesus stated that the Gospel of the Kingdom should be preached in the entire world for a witness unto all nations. The commission, "God ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" is a command and an authorization. The church has no choice but to obey.

The Lord has commissioned the church to do a definite work. With this commission goes a heavy responsibility, and with the responsibility goes the necessary authority. We must remember that RESPONSIBILITY and AUTHORITY go together. They cannot be separated.

The responsibility of the church may be listed as follows:

1. **TO PREACH SALVATION:** Christ has made salvation possible by providing it; the church must make it actual by proclaiming it.
2. **TO PROVIDE A MEANS OF WORSHIP:** The church must be a house of prayer where Jesus is honored in worship, prayer and testimony.
3. **TO PROVIDE FELLOWSHIP:** Man is a social creature; he craves fellowship, and an exchange of friendship. The church provides a fellowship where all earthly distinctions are obliterated.
4. **TO PREACH HOLINESS:** The church must teach men how to live as well as how to die. Against the downward trends of society it must lift a warning voice; at all danger points it must plant a beacon light.
5. **TO ADMINISTER THE ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH:** An ORDINANCE is a statute prescribing a definite ritual in the church which was instituted for a definite spiritual meaning. An ordinance uses earthly emblems, which bring heavenly blessings. The ordinances are (a) Baptism, (b) Lord's Supper and (3) Foot Washing.
6. **TO ADMINISTER CHURCH GOVERNMENT:** Church Government has to do with the administration of the affairs of the church including discipline and finance. It also has the authority of deciding many questions such as marriage and divorce and the keeping of the Sabbath day.

B. THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The Lord's Supper was instituted by the Lord Himself on the night that He was betrayed after He had eaten the Passover supper with His disciples (Luke 22:19-20).

1. NAMES GIVEN THIS ORDINANCE.

- (a). Lord's Supper - It was instituted by the Lord and is a memorial of Him. It is "Supper" in the sense that it is the last meal in this dispensation - the next time will be with Him in His kingdom.
- (b). Eucharist - This means, "to give thanks."
- (c). Communion - This means a sharing, a "partaking together."
- (d). Sacrament - This word comes from the Latin "sacramentum" and means an oath of allegiance.

From the names used we have the meaning of this ordinance brought out: commemoration, thanksgiving, communion and commitment.

2. ELEMENTS USED.

- (a). Unleavened bread - symbolic of His broken body.
- (b). Fruit of the Vine - symbolic of His shed blood.

3. SPIRITUAL MEANING.

The Lord's Supper is a memorial of Calvary and a looking forward to the Coming of the Lord. By faith the Lord's body is discerned. This only can happen if there is no condemnation in the heart of the believer.

4. PREPARATION FOR PARTAKING.

Self-examination and confession of sin (if any) must take place in preparation for partaking of the communion (I Corinthians 11:28). If sin is in the heart, there cannot be faith and the Lord's body cannot be discerned. Many are sick and even die because they partake unworthily.

5. BLESSINGS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

- (a). Forgiveness of sins and healing of the body as we look back to Calvary;
- (b). Strength for the journey and encouragement for the soul as we look forward to the Second Coming.

C. WATER BAPTISM.

1. ONE BAPTISM.

Scriptural Reference:

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5).

There is one baptism, which has two elements, water and spirit. The church baptizes the convert in water; Jesus Christ baptizes the believer with the Holy Ghost. Both elements are necessary to be baptized into the body.

2. MEANING OF BAPTISM.

It comes from the Greek "baptizo" which means to "dip, plunge, immerse." Baptism can only have significance when it is immersion. In baptism we are identified with Christ in death and burial (Romans 6:3-4).

3. PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM.

Repentance is the only necessary requirement for baptism. Water baptism should never be administered until the candidate has fully repented (Acts 2:38).

4. WHEN MAY BAPTISM BE ADMINISTERED?

The moment one repents he is a candidate for water baptism and it should not be delayed (Acts 10:48; Acts 16:33; Acts 9:18).

5. FORMULA FOR BAPTISM.

Water baptism is administered in the Name of Jesus. The apostles always baptized in the Name of Jesus for the remission of sins. To be baptized in water one must be immersed in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

D. GOD'S FINANCIAL PLAN.

1. WHAT IS A TITHE?

Scriptural References:

"And all the tithe of the land...is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord" (Leviticus 27:30).

"And behold I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance" (Numbers 18:24).

"But the tithes of the children of Israel...I have given to the Levites to inherit" (Numbers 18:24).

It is not necessary to state that the church has to have finances in order to carry on the great work of evangelizing the world. It is quite apparent that there has to be a financial plan. A study of God's Word reveals that the Lord has provided for this need by instituting a definite financial plan to finance His work upon earth. God's plan is TITHING.

A tithe is one-tenth of your increase (Numbers 18:21). If a man's paycheck is \$100.00, he should take out \$10.00 (a tithe) for the Lord.

Tithing will work anywhere in the world. The church will be amply provided for if all would tithe.

2. LAW OR GRACE?

Tithing belongs to the Abrahamic covenant and was instituted long before the law. Both Abraham and Jacob paid tithes (Genesis 14:20; Hebrews 7:4; Genesis 28:22). The fact that Abraham tithed proves that it was the result of faith and not of law.

3. TO WHOM DOES THE TITHE BELONG?

The tithes are to be brought into God's storehouse (Malachi 3:10). This is clearly your home church where you get your spiritual food. The Bible says "Bring" not "Send" the tithes into the storehouse. The only time tithes should be sent is when one is away on vacation or visiting.

The tithes belong to God (Leviticus 27:30). They belong to the Levites (Numbers 18:24). They are for the support of the ministry.

E. THE SABBATH DAY.

1. KEEPING THE SABBATH DAY IS IMPOSSIBLE.

The seventh day was to be kept from sunset to sunset (Leviticus 23:32). For this to be done throughout the world is an impossibility. In the Arctic Zones the sun never sets for days each year. Also there is the problem of crossing the International Date Line. One could have two Sabbaths or miss the Sabbath entirely. The keeping of the Seventh Day was a Ceremonial Law given the nation of Israel in Palestine. It was never meant to be universal.

2. THE NEW TESTAMENT IS SILENT REGARDING KEEPING THE SEVENTH DAY.

The church is enjoined in the New Testament as follows:

Worship of God enjoined	50 times;
Idolatry forbidden	12 times;
Profanity forbidden	4 times;
Honor of father and mother	6 times;
Adultery forbidden	12 times;
Theft forbidden	6 times;
False witness forbidden	4 times;
Covetousness forbidden	9 times.

Keeping the Sabbath was not enjoined even one time!

3. THE LORD'S DAY WAS NOT SELECTED IN PLACE OF THE SABBATH.

The Sabbath was abolished and therefore needed no substitution. The first day of the week was the day to celebrate the Lord's resurrection. On the Lord's day:

- Jesus rose as the Head of a new Creation.
- He appeared to His disciples.
- The Holy Ghost was given.
- The birthday of the church.
- The door of the kingdom was unlocked.
- Disciples met to break bread in remembrance of Him (Acts 20:7).
- Disciples brought their tithes and offerings (I Corinthians 16:2).
- The Lord's Day (Revelation 1:10).

4. THE SABBATH WAS A TYPE: JESUS IS THE ANTITYPE.

The Sabbath was a shadow; Jesus is the body (Colossians 2:16-17). *"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God"* (Hebrews 4:9). Jesus is the Sabbath to the New Testament church. The rest is now in the Holy Ghost (Isaiah 28:11-12).

LESSON FOUR

SELF HELP LESSON

State whether the following are TRUE or FALSE.

- _____ 1. The church is a blessing but has no authority.
- _____ 2. It is possible to keep the Sabbath Day.
- _____ 3. The church is responsible to preach holiness.
- _____ 4. The Bible instructs us how often the Lord's Supper is to be kept.
- _____ 5. The word "Eucharist" means "to give thanks."
- _____ 6. In baptism we are identified with Christ in death and burial.
- _____ 7. To be saved one must worship God on Saturday.
- _____ 8. We must pay our debts before we tithe.
- _____ 9. The Tithes belong to the Levites.

B. Write a paragraph explaining how the following truth would apply to the church:
"Responsibility and Authority must go together."