

“The Authority of Christ Today”

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*“And He summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs,
and gave them authority over the unclean spirits” (Mark 6:7).*

The word used for “authority” is the word **used to describe a person whose position gives them the power to act and order**. Mark uses the word “authority” nine times. Jesus taught as one having authority (Mark 1:22). He exercised “power” over demons (Mark 1:27). In healing the sick Jesus revealed His power over sin and its consequences (Mark 2:10). It is this same transfer of “authority” He gave to the twelve disciples (Mark 3:15; 6:7). The power exhibited by Jesus Christ was evident to all; from where this power came was openly questioned (Mark 11:27-33). The religious establishment desired to assign its source to Satan. Jesus openly refuted such blatant error.

There is a parable unique to Mark in Mark 13:28-37. In the parable our Lord speaks of the time when He will be physically absent from the work. Verse 34 continues the thought found in Mark 3:15 and 6:7 where authority is given to His servants in His absence. **It is through His people that His presence is continued**. It is because of this authority transfer that His people are able to go into all the world and call everyone, everywhere to repentance and faith in Christ. It is the same idea contained in Matthew 28:18 where Jesus is described as having been given all authority in heaven and in earth.

The authority of Christ transferred to the disciples invested them with “power” to preach the gospel of the kingdom, to cast out demons, and to heal the sick. It was essentially the very same acts and works Jesus was exhibiting in His ministry.

Although the kingdom that awaits its final installment is still yet future, we must not neglect the truth of the kingdom today. If we were to consider the idea of the kingdom from the book of Acts through the book of Revelation, I believe our understanding of this idea would be greatly enhanced.

First, after our Lord’s resurrection He continued “speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3).

Second, the Jewish disciples of Christ looked at such teaching as directly applicable to them (Acts 1:6). Our Lord did not answer their question directly, but guided their focus to the larger purpose of God (Acts 1:7, 8).

Third, Philip, in Samaria, preached “the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12).

Fourth, Paul, after his first missionary journey, returned to Antioch and encouraged his audience “to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God’” (Acts 14:22).

Fifth, Paul, during his second missionary journey, “he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8). “This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:10).

Sixth, when Paul addressed the Ephesian elders he referenced the content of his preaching by saying, “among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God” (Acts 20:25).

Seventh, in Paul’s final statements “he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him” (Acts 28:23, 31).

Finally, throughout the rest of the New Testament letters consistent reference is made to the already-not yet idea of the kingdom of God (Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:20; 6:9, 10; 15:24, 50; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; Col. 1:13; 4:11; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 1:5; 2 Tim. 4:1, 18; Heb. 1:8; 12:28; James 2:5; 2 Pet. 1:11; Rev. 1:9; 12:10).

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Part of my past struggle was my attempt to explain the bible via systems, and the bible does not always fit into our systems. Our desire to systematize is understandable, and although the Scripture teaches a system and although the system is without contradiction, our finite minds create systems that are closed and defensive and not open and receptive. Let me suggest five initial thoughts concerning the Bible's "system."

- The Bible's system is Trinitarian. God existing in one essence manifested in three persons is the sum total of creation's cause, meaning, and goal.
- The Bible's system is Christo-centric. It has Jesus Christ as the centerpiece of its activity.
- The Bible's system is couched in the context of kingdom terminology.
- The Bible's system is singular and intentional in design and execution. It is unstoppable and certain.
- The Bible's system speaks of an agreement between God and His people that categorizes itself in two large parts: an old agreement/covenant/testament and a new agreement/covenant/testament.

I believe man-produced systems can contribute to our learning, but I do not believe any man-produced system can afford to be closed. What I just exposed you to is biblical theology and biblical theology says Jesus, Paul and the rest preached the kingdom of God, and somewhere along the journey the church has been unclear on this point.

Although I believe there is significant discontinuity in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, I also believe there is significant continuity in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. I believe the Bible has a singular, unifying idea that causes every note sounded by God's revelation, either general or special, to resonate with a Christological theme that has as its movement the redemption of His people and the glorification of the Trinitarian God.

I cannot speak for everyone, this much I recognize and understand, but I can speak for myself as to where I have been and where I am currently residing. In my past I was too close to the problem to see the solution. The old adage, "Can't see the forest for the trees" was true of me. I embraced a system of theology before I actually understood the biblical text. By allowing the text to speak for itself, I have come to conclude that no system can afford to be absolute or closed without doing an injustice to the text and becoming divisive and dogmatic. I am still learning to let the text speak independent of my past "systems" and I am still growing (at least I hope so) in courage to accept the voice of the text even when it appears to be contrary to my past "systems."

This does not mean that everything I embraced inside of systems is wrong, but it does mean that those outside my systems of thought still have much to contribute to the ongoing dialogue of learning as I wrestle with the biblical text.

For me the journey is refreshing. It takes courage to think outside the theological box. What I am finding is that orthodoxy and evangelical theology (biblical theology if you like) is much deeper and far broader than I initially thought. There is a richness to God that I had previously underappreciated. Now I glory in what I know *and do not know*. Such thinking is enabling me to be humble, teach-able, and charitable toward the theological unknown. God is proving to be far greater than my past "system" of thought. Although some might find such thinking problematic and perhaps unnerving, I find it exhilarating and breathtaking. My journey has God as its subject and object. He is both the source, the means, and the end.

An area in which I am being enriched is that of God's already- not yet kingdom expression. May the Holy Spirit continue to enable you to push beyond your system and into the very heartbeat of God. May you find kindred spirits in your pursuit of Him.