

# Christ's Authority

By

Curtis Dickinson

The events of Christ's life often give emphasis to the power and authority He exercised in the world. Before His ascension he claimed, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples in all nations, immersing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age" (Mt. 28:18–20).

Often the "authority" mentioned here is used merely to put leverage behind His command to make disciples, as if He said, "I have authority to command you to go; therefore, you better do as I say." This misses the point by a long shot. It is upon the basis of Christ's authority as Lord that all nations must account to Him, that everything pertaining to an and his relationship to heaven is dependent upon Him. It is upon this basis that disciples are to be made. His word is authority. It is law. Therefore, it is to be taught to every disciple. That word will judge man in the final day because it is the word of the One in power. For His authority derives from the fact that He has total power. There are difficulties and obstacles to be encountered in making disciples, but the Lord has power to sustain His messengers in all circumstances. "Lo I am with you always."

It is in knowing this power and authority of the Lord that one is able to follow through in faithful service to God in all the many responsibilities laid upon him. We may summarize this enablement under four propositions.

1. Knowing the power and authority of Christ enables one to disregard the cost of discipleship. Viewing the world today and the kind of "church-ism" that passes for Christian faith, the 'cost' of discipleship would hardly seem worth considering, seeing that the current idea of successful "faith" is that kind of religion that brings one health, wealth and fame. Modern evangelism seldom suggests that discipleship requires self-denial, that one is really expected to surrender worldly ambitions and that there may be a heavy price to pay. The fact remains, however, that if one is to have the glory of God, he cannot have the glory of men; that if he is to be a servant of the Master, Jesus, he cannot succeed in serving master Mammon; that if he commits himself to pursue holiness, he will be cut off from numerous segments of the world that are supposed to contribute to the good life. The cost may be in the form of forfeiting a career, or losing the love of those dear to him, or suffering numerous other heartbreaks and disappointments.

Many people never get over the loss of these things surrendered in order to faithfully serve Christ, always recounting them, sorrowing over them and dreaming of having them restored in some way. But one who knows the power and authority of Christ can disregard such losses with no regrets, as Paul did. "Yea, verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord:" he wrote, "for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may gain Christ and found in him...that I may know him...and the power of the resurrection..." (Phil. 3:8–10). It was by Christ's power to give Paul prestige, fame, pleasure and wealth

beyond all that he could dream of. Compared to knowing Christ, the things Paul had lost, which were of great value according to the world's measure, were less than nothing; they were detestable.

Now, do we demonstrate to the world the kind of knowledge of Christ that clearly says that He is worth more than all the world affords, and that the disappointments, tribulations and afflictions matter nothing to us because we know him? By His authority and power He is able to supply every need—emotional, physical, social and spiritual. Therefore, the disciple gladly pays whatever price is required.

2. Knowing the power and authority of Christ enables one to serve Him without fear of man. There are many Biblical illustrations of this fact, but Daniel and his three friends will suffice. When Nebuchadnezzar prohibited prayer on pain of death, Daniel went right on praying, and this in front of an open window so everyone might know his stand (Dan 6:10 ff). He prayed by the authority of One greater than Nebuchadnezzar.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego defied the king's command to bow down and worship his image. They knew the cost, having heard the ultimatum—"if you worship not, you shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" Their answer shows their understanding of power and authority. "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter." They were unafraid. "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us...and he will deliver us out of your hand, O King." They were confident. "But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods." If they had to pay the price with their lives, it didn't matter; they were still under the Lord's authority, not man's.

The apostles had a keen sense of Christ' authority. After being miraculously released from prison, they were strictly charged to preach no more in the name of Jesus. But with no time required to think it over, they replied, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Paul was hounded from town to town by the disobedient Jews, narrowly escaping with his life each time. He knew very well that if he kept preaching they would succeed in getting him imprisoned or killed or both. His comment was, "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy" (Acts 20:24). In the spirit of Daniel, he knew the power and authority of the Lord, and recognized that while he did not have to live, he did have to obey Him who had power to uphold him for the work he was given to do. In sharp contrast is the shameful slogan often given to excuse our compromising disobedience: "A man has to live." Not so! We do not have to live. We do have to recognize the power and authority of the Lord Jesus the Christ.

3. Knowing the power and authority of Christ enables one to live without fear of worldly threats. Even though in America we are not threatened with imprisonment or death for serving the Lord, there still hangs over our nation a gloomy cloud of fear. One can easily envisage an outbreak of war, a loss of freedom, or a depression bringing in violence and loss of possessions. Newsletters on how to protect these possessions sell for as much as "\$25.00 per issue. Fear has become big business.

From a worldly viewpoint, all these fears are well grounded. We are no longer the most powerful nation, militarily—we have competition. We no longer can boast of the

highest standard of living. Leaders have very little confidence that we could win a total war. But all this is to reckon apart from the power and authority of the Lord.

Daniel not only taught us that the Lord has power over our personal lives, but he succeeded in teaching Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar and Darius, all successive rulers of the nation, that “the most High rules in the kingdom of men” (Dan. 4:25). In his prayer he said, “Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: and he changes the times and the season: he removes kings, and sets up kings;...he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him...” (Dan 2:20–22). God judges nations, including our own. We may be sure that our nation will not prosper if it continues to rebel against God’s laws. Examples are numerous, such as officially approved abortion, official approval of homosexuality, and official defiance of God’s laws regarding the home, education and a person’s right to the fruit of his own labor. God’s judgment may already be falling, and it may be carried out in numerous ways, but it is inevitable unless there is general repentance.

Daniel witnessed judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar, judgment upon Belshazzar and judgment upon the whole nation of Babylon. Yet there is no sign of fear where Daniel is concerned. If God can judge one, he can spare another. We have already pointed out that the true disciple is ready to forfeit all for Christ. Therefore, we need have no fear of the future where the nation is concerned. The power to save it or deliver it to judgment is in the hands of Christ who has “all power.” He is able to deliver His disciples even in the midst of the fiery furnace of national catastrophe, but if he does not deliver us, we gladly suffer the loss of all things in order to be counted faithful to Him and receive the recompense of reward at His coming.

What we must do is witness to the world that we know the Christ who has all power and authority, and that we believe that His will and purpose supersede all national goals and international agreements and will, therefore, succeed in spite of all corrupt power of man.

4. Knowing the power and authority of Christ enables one to have peace and contentment. It is upon Christ’s authority and power to save that one may rest assured of the forgiveness of sin and of the gift of immortal life, and hence have the peace of which Paul wrote: “Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus the Christ” (Rom. 5:1). That should be enough to satisfy anyone who realizes the horror of sin and the worse horror of a final and irreversible death by burning.

But it is easy for Christians to believe in redemption and yet have to struggle against discontentment. The philosophy of the times, as fed through the media and the general social framework, is that man **does** live by bread, after all, with all the gadgets and paraphernalia that he can afford and a few that he can’t. he never has enough, and can never stay up with the changing trends. On every hand he is subjected to the “success” syndrome of the world, with \$ucce\$\$ spelled with the dollar sign.

But Christ reveals a purpose that is to be fulfilled without any regard to man’s innate powers or apparent success. He promises to supply, not what meets the standard of living, but what man needs. He promises that His spirit will come in and spring up as living water, to fill life with peace and contentment.

More than that, He is able to make “all things work together for good to them that are called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28). This is an impossibility with man.

There are too many variables. We can't even work out a simple schedule that meets all the demands; too many emergencies and unplanned events. But then, we don't have all power and authority. Christ does. He can and does work all things after the counsel of His will.

.....  
Copyright © Curtis Dickinson. Formatted and Posted by Ken Fortier Ministries. Permission is hereby granted by Mrs. Regina Dickinson to reproduce and distribute Curtis' articles to as many as possible. This statement is to remain attached to this article for permission to be valid. Vol. XIX, Number 9.  
.....