

## AUTHORITY

In the Gospel of the Apostle Matthew, in chapter 28: 18 to 20, it is written: "Jesus came and spoke to them, saying: All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.

Go therefore and 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 surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

These words were spoken by the Master to his then eleven disciples.

The Lord Jesus ordered them to go out into the world making disciples, baptizing them and teaching them to keep all his teachings, because he had received all authority, both in heaven and on earth; thus, the Lord who is present in the church manifests his authority through it, giving it the conditions to carry out his work.

In the priestly prayer made by the Lord Jesus, as described by the Apostle John in his Gospel, in chapter 17: 22, the Master states: "I have given them the glory that you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one";

This text teaches us very explicitly about unity; thus, when the Lord says that he has transmitted to us his glory, received from the Father, it is certain that his glory involves authority and power to carry out his work.

And yet, in the Book of Acts of the Apostles, in chapter 1:8, it is stated that the Lord Jesus, before being taken up to heaven, said to his disciples: "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 ends of the earth."

Thus, when the Holy Spirit, who is also the Spirit of Christ, descends upon us, or upon the church, the church is endowed with authority and power to testify concerning Jesus.

Also in the Book of Acts of the Apostles, in chapter 10, it is reported: "There lived in Caesarea a man named Cornelius, a centurion of the cohort called the Italians, a devout man who feared God with all his household, who gave much alms to the people and prayed to God always.

This man clearly saw in a vision, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God who came to him and said to him, "Cornelius!" And he, looking intently at him and filled with fear, asked, "What is it, Lord?" And the angel said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God."

Now send messengers to Joppa and summon Simon, whose surname is Peter.

He is staying with Simon, a tanner, whose residence is situated by the sea.

When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who were serving him, and having told them everything, he sent them to Joppa.

The next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray.

The next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray.

Being hungry, he wanted to eat; but while they were preparing food for him, he fell into a trance. Then he saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being descended, and it was let down to the earth by its four corners, containing all kinds of four-footed animals, reptiles and birds of the air.

And he heard a voice saying to him, "Get up, Peter! Kill and eat."

But Peter said, "Certainly not, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.

The voice spoke to him a second time: What God has made clean, do not call common.

This happened three times, and then that object was taken back into the sky.

While Peter was perplexed about what the vision meant, behold, the men sent from Cornelius, having inquired about Simon's house, stood at the door, and knocked, asking if Simon, whose surname was Peter, was staying there.

While Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Two men are looking for you. Get up, go down, and go with them, without hesitating, for I have sent them."

Then Peter went down to the men and said, "Here I am. Is it I whom you seek? Why are you here?"

Then they said, "Cornelius the centurion, a righteous man and one who fears God and is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house and hear what you say."

Peter therefore invited them in and gave them hospitality. The next day he got up and went with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went with him.

The next day he entered Caesarea. Cornelius was waiting for them, having gathered together his relatives and close friends.

It happened that, as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.

But Peter lifted him up, saying, Stand up; I also am a man.

Speaking to him, he entered and found many people gathered together. He addressed them, saying, "You know that it is forbidden for a Jew to associate with or come near anyone of another race. But God has shown me that he should not consider anyone common or unclean. Therefore, when I was called, I came without hesitation. I ask, then, why did you send for me?"

Cornelius answered him, "Four days ago today, at this time, I was observing the ninth hour of prayer in my house, and behold, a man in dazzling apparel stood before me and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms have been remembered in the sight of God.'

Send therefore to Joppa, and call Simon, whose surname is Peter: for he is lodging at the house of Simon the tanner, by the seaside.

Therefore I sent for you without delay, and you did well to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God, ready to hear everything that has been commanded you by the Lord.

Then Peter answered and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and doeth righteousness, is accepted with him.

This is the word that God sent to the children of Israel, preaching the gospel of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

You know the word that went out throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also killed him by hanging him on a tree.

God raised him up on the third day and granted him to be revealed, not to all the people but to witnesses chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that it is he who was appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.

To him all the prophets testify that through his name everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins.

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.

And the believers of the circumcision who came with Peter were astonished, because that on the Gentiles also the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out; for they heard them speaking in tongues and glorifying God. Then Peter said, "Can anyone forbid water so that these people may not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"

And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay with them for a few days."

Someone, reading this text, might ask: Why didn't the angel himself preach to Cornelius instead of having to send for the Apostle Peter in another city? After all, in human eyes, the revelation given by an angel, a creature from heaven, would be much more important, and his word would have more credibility than the word of another man.

Answering, because the angel had no authority to do so.

Thus, it was necessary to call Peter; this one, yes, witness, church, so that with the authority and power transmitted by Jesus Christ, conquered through his death on the cross, he could preach and, together with his preaching, the Holy Spirit would fall upon all the listeners.

The Lord Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and on earth, and He is in unity with the church, not with the angels. In other words, He and the church are one.

We can see that Cornelius had also already heard about Jesus and his death, as these facts were already known throughout Judea, starting from Galilee.

Below, we will transcribe a text from the Apostle Paul, from his Epistle to the Galatians, from chapter 1: 10, to chapter 2; 10, of great importance, as the entire Bible is, but in this case, related to authority:

"Am I now trying to win the favor of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men?

If I were still pleasing men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which I preached is not after man: for I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

For you have heard of my conduct in time past in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and wasted it.

And in my nation, as to Judaism, I was ahead of many in my age, being extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

But when it pleased him who set me apart before I was born and called me by his grace to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not defer to flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went through the regions of Arabia and returned again to Damascus.

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and I stayed with him fifteen days, and I saw no other of the apostles except James the Lord's brother.

Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

Then I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

And he was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ.

They only heard it said: He who once persecuted us now preaches the faith he once sought to destroy.

And they glorified God on my behalf.

Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus with me.

I went up in obedience to a revelation; and I explained to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who seemed to have greater influence, so that somehow I might not run or have run in vain.

Yet not even Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.

And this was because of false brethren brought in, who sought to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, and to bring us into bondage: to whom we did not submit ourselves, not even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

But those who seemed to be of greater influence (what they were in the past is of no concern to me; God does not accept the person of man), those, I say, who seemed to me to be of some importance, added nothing to me. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel of the circumcision (for he who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship of the circumcision worked in me also toward the Gentiles), and when they knew the grace that had been given to me, James, Cephas, and John, who were considered a pillar, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcision; only they urged us to remember the poor, which I also was careful to do.

The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Galatians because they were allowing themselves to be led astray by false doctrines of some who taught that they needed to be circumcised and follow the rites of Judaism.

Then, the Apostle, quite firmly, exhorts them to remain firm in the gospel he preached and, he also brings them some more of his teachings on the doctrine of grace.

Something very interesting that this text also shows us is that the Apostle, upon receiving a revelation, he who had not learned anything from any man, who also did not credit the gospel he preached to his wisdom or logical conclusions, who, as he himself said: "I did not consult flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me", and also, with regard to the Apostles of Jerusalem, when he was there, "those, I say, who seemed to me to be something added nothing to me"; he who claimed that what he preached he had received through revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ himself, this Apostle Paul was obedient to what was revealed to him and went to Jerusalem to meet with the other Apostles and the leaders of the church, submitting his doctrine to them; this "so that, somehow, he would not run or have run in vain".

What a beautiful lesson in submission!

If the Apostle Paul were tempted, and even if he gave in to the temptation of not submitting to the authority of the church, of becoming an independent leader of the many churches he opened, if he looked at the large number of children in the faith that he had, considering that he already had the knowledge given by the Lord Jesus himself, I believe that his story would end there.

It is also true that it was the Lord Himself who spoke to him through revelation; it was not any man who told him that he needed to go to Jerusalem.

But later, the Apostle Paul and Barnabas also separated, but not because of doctrinal differences.

On the other hand, we cannot disregard the church's stance; how it received him and dealt with the matter.

After hearing the Apostle's exposition, that he had been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision for those who were not Jews, the leaders, without creating any embarrassment, extended to him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, which means considering them participants in the ministry, in the communion of the church, so that they could go to the Gentiles.

The church, which was in its early days, could also have created several obstacles, such as requiring the Apostle to undergo a period of observation, to undertake a study, etc.

And yet, for Jews, even those who converted, circumcision must have been something very expensive, already ingrained in their culture, tradition and, mainly, because it was a precept of the law.

Here are two more texts for reflection.

In the gospel of the Evangelist Mark, in chapter 9: 38 to 40, it is written: "John said to him, Master, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and he does not follow us; and we forbade him, because he did not follow with us.

But Jesus answered, Forbid him not: for there is no man that shall do a miracle in my name, and afterward shall speak evil of me.

For whoever is not against us is for us."

Also in the gospel of the Evangelist Luke, in chapter 9: 49 and 50, we have this same text in the following form: "John spoke and said: Master, we saw a certain man who, in your name, cast out demons and we forbade him, because he does not follow with us.

But Jesus said to him, "Do not forbid him, for he who is not against you is for you."

The Evangelist Mark reports that the Lord replied: "Do not forbid him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in my name and then be able to speak evil of me."

The fact is that one cannot speak ill of Jesus either immediately after performing miracles or later, as the years go by.

We need to be attentive and obedient, like the Apostle Paul, to what the Lord reveals to us or wants to reveal.

Let us conclude with the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ that are described in the Gospel of the Apostle Matthew, in chapter 7: 21 to 23: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father is in heaven.

Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, and in your name cast out demons, and in your name done many wonderful works?'

Then I will profess to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of iniquity.'"

RICARDO LINHARES TAMY

Biblical texts extracted from the translation by JOAO FERREIRA DE ALMEIDA – Revised and Updated.