

What does the Bible Say?

Lesson 9: God's Power: Identity and Authority

From Lessons 7 and 8, you learned about the tremendous suffering that Jesus endured to die for the sins of God's children and saw the love he poured out for us on the cross. This suffering was the price Jesus paid that we might return to God and be restored to our rightful place in the Garden that God originally designed for us. This was the price Jesus paid that we might turn from all the things in the world that tempt us and draw us to worship ourselves, people, things, idols, and the world, instead of God. This is the price Jesus paid for us to live no longer for our own glory but for God's glory, honor, fame, and power. This was the price Jesus paid for us to have the Word of God today as our guide to protect us and remind us of what is true, instead of listening to the lies of Satan. Jesus's ultimate sacrifice proves to us today that God loves us and desires more than anything to have a relationship with us and live with us for eternity. With his sacrifice for each one of us, we never have to doubt his love again.

God's heart is that we might find rest in him, turn to him as our heavenly Father, and desire a relationship with him more than anything else or anyone else in the world. His heart is that we would want to be rescued from the world and be a part of his plan to save the world from sin and all that comes with sin: depression, loneliness, shame, loss of identity, addictions, broken relationships, and a life controlled by Satan's lies. Jesus paid the price for our sins, which means we have a choice: to choose his payment that fully satisfied God's expectations for our judgment, or accept by ourselves full, personal responsibility for all the wrongs we've done and face eternal separation from God. God never wanted that. And through Jesus, God's own living Word, God himself provided a plan to rescue us with his blood and resurrection power of the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 3:18). Jesus's sacrifice and resurrection allow us to come to Jesus freely, experience him, overcome sin and the lies of Satan, and remain safe in God's care until the end. Imagine the impact that this resurrection power can have on your life and the life of everyone around you!

Jesus's Identity and Authority

We see Jesus's power through his resurrection, but we've also seen Jesus's divine power as he walked on this earth: power to heal the sick, raise the dead, drive out demons, command nature, multiply food, and forgive sins. Jesus's power was rooted in the identity and authority that God had given him as the Son and Word of God who created the universe. If we recall from Lesson 5, we learned that God's Son and Messiah would be given these titles: "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). John and Paul remind us that Jesus is also "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Revelation 19:16, 1 Timothy 6:15). Jesus's divine identity and authority gave him the legitimate right to exercise the powers that God had given him. This power revealed his authority so that people might see and believe in him to be the Messiah and the One who came from God.

Once Jesus was resurrected from the dead, his body, soul, and spirit ascended into heaven where he assumed all authority over heaven and earth. Before dying, Jesus declared to the Jewish high priest that "From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One" (Matthew 26:64). The phrase "right hand" is a Jewish metaphor meaning that Jesus has been given all power and authority to judge and to save mankind. Jesus himself said that God "entrusted all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22, NIV), and "granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him" (17:2). Since only God has the authority to judge and save men, the Jewish leaders crucified Jesus for

claiming equal authority to God. Yet, Jesus knew who he was. He didn't need to prove his authority or change his identity to please men. When Jesus appeared to his followers after his resurrection, he again confirmed his authority by saying, "All authority in heaven and on earth is given to me." ¹⁹ So go and make followers of all people in the world." (Matthew 28:18).

Underline all the places where you see Jesus's identity and titles give to him. How does this identity give him authority and power?

Underline the ways Jesus used his power and authority. Why did he use his power in these ways?

We see from these passages that Jesus never used his authority or power to hurt people or gain honor that had not been given to him by God. His heart was always to love people and help them to know him as God. He used his power to save people and bring them into eternal life. His desire still today is to restore our relationship with the Father who loves us. Jesus himself explains:

"⁴⁷ If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. ⁴⁸ There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day. ⁴⁹ For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. ⁵⁰ I know that his command leads to eternal life." (John 12, NIV)

In this way, we see that Jesus knows there will be a judgment day, and those who do not accept him or his words will be condemned because as sinners, there is no way for us to save ourselves. We know that all our sacrifices and good works could never take away our sins or make us holy before God. Yet, Jesus didn't come to earth to condemn us or even judge us. He came to love us and show us the way to the Father. While on earth, he used his divine authority to serve the people around him and lay down his life on a cross to save all who might believe in him. He did miracles day after day and used his resurrection to prove himself to be God that many might put their faith in him. We know that God is love, and everything Jesus did was to show that love and bring glory to the Father, Yet in all this, Jesus is still King of kings and Lord of lords. As King, he deserves to be obeyed and honored, and it's in this understanding of Jesus's full identity, we begin to understand who we are in his kingdom.

The Believer's Identity

Just as Jesus knew who he was, we too must know who we are to understand the spiritual identity and authority God has given us so that we can exercise the power he gives us in his name. By now, we've heard that we can be "children" of God, but let's dive deeper into how that happens and what it means. John introduces this idea of being God's children in the first chapter of his book of John, making this idea a foundational concept of what it means to be rooted and grounded in Jesus:

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.... ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—
¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. (John 1)

In this passage, the word “believe” means to put our faith, devotion, and trust in Jesus and to believe in who he is and that what he says is true,¹ while the word “receive” means to accept “in order obey.”² With this kind of faith, a belief that results in obedience, we are given a special promise and divine right.

What happens when we believe in Jesus as the true light of the world and decide to obey his teachings? (v. 12)

Who gives us this right? What if someone in authority, including parents or spouses, disagree with our decision to follow Jesus? Have you ever had this happen? How does this verse give you confidence? (v. 12-13)

Jesus doesn’t just stop at this amazing new identity as his son or daughter. Psalm 68:6 says that “God sets the lonely in families; he leads out the prisoners with singing.” In other words, we’re not an “only child.” We have brothers and sisters who live under our loving Father and shepherd. In fact, Jesus says this about us: “And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother” (Mark 3:34-35). God also gives us a new identity as his friends when he said, “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15). We get an even deeper understanding of the kind of intimate relationship God wants to have with us through Jesus and these passages: “your Maker is your husband” (Isaiah 54:5) and “I will make you my bride forever” (Hosea 2:19, ERV). So, even though Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords, this is how he relates to us: We are his friends, family, and spouse! Wow, that’s close.

Describe how a friend and marriage relationship might look with Jesus. Describe how being a family of believers or brothers and sisters might look with Jesus as both our brother and our parent.

What do these verses mean to you in your life?

The Believer’s Authority

Since Jesus as the Son of God inherited the authority of God, we too as God’s children, friend, and spouse inherit special authority given to us through Jesus. The concept of co-rulership with God begins in the book of Genesis in the Garden when God says, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground” (Genesis 1:26). God gave Adam and Eve and all their descendants authority to rule over animals and to bear children together (Genesis 1:28). He gave Adam the special responsibilities of naming the animals and taking care of the land. God gave Eve the special role of being a helper to Adam and a mother of children. For this reason, Adam gave his wife the name Eve, the “mother of the living” (2:18-25), and Eve names their first son, Cain (Genesis 4:1). We see in the first few chapters of Genesis that the idea of co-rulership was given to both men and women, with various roles and responsibilities given to both, some specialized and others shared between them.

¹ “4100. Pisteuó,” *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*, Electronic Database, 2011, Biblesoft, Inc. <https://biblehub.com/greek/4100.htm>.

² “2983. Lambanó,” *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*, <https://biblehub.com/greek/2983.htm>.

This concept of co-rulership appears again after Jesus's resurrection where Paul teaches us that "Even when we were dead in our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:5-6). Again, he says, "If we remain faithful even in suffering, we will also rule with him" (II Timothy 2:12). In this second passage, Paul is referring to a time when all faithful followers of Jesus will one day rule with Jesus in heaven. We see this promise in Revelation when John shares his vision of Jesus speaking to the churches. In Revelation 3, Jesus actually challenges lukewarm believers to be either hot or cold! With strong words, he rebukes them saying, "So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth" (3:16). Here we see Jesus as King calling his subjects into the honor and passion he deserves because of the sacrifice and love he has poured out for us.

Still Jesus does not leave his children without hope. To strengthen and encourage these unfaithful followers, he reminds them of his will for them to rule with him in heaven: "To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne" (3:21). We hear Jesus's heart again in Revelation 12 when he speaks about the "brothers and sisters" who were victorious: "They triumphed over him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death" (12:11). From these verses, we see that co-rulership is part of God's design and plan for his children. Similar to the way a prince grows into the role of the authority given to him by his father the king, we see that co-rulership and power come with both privilege and great responsibility.

Look at verses II Timothy 2:12, Revelation 3:16, 21, and Revelation 12:11. How does Jesus define a faithful follower? Why do you think Jesus asks this of us?

Go through each passage and give examples of what faithfulness might look like in real life.

What does Jesus promise us if we are faithful in this way?

Do you feel hot, cold, or lukewarm for Jesus? Are you ready to suffer for him, even if it means dying for your faith? Talk about what suffering for Jesus might look like in your life. What sacrifices are you willing to make? Is there anything you are not willing to do for Jesus?

This Week:

Write in your journal:

- Continue reading verses from [My Identity in Christ](#) and [Promises of God](#). Read these verses over yourself.
- Think about what it means to be hot for Jesus in your life. Write what you want that to look like. Continue reading in the book of Acts to see how Jesus's earliest followers were hot for Jesus!
- Think about what it means to suffer for Jesus, even if it means dying for him. Spend time in prayer about this. Ask Jesus to strengthen your heart and your faith, and write about what you desire in this area of your life. Read the book of Acts how Jesus's first followers suffered for him.