**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**The Real Issue Concerning Morality**

Many of you who are listening to our program this morning are very much concerned about where our country is headed. You are concerned about the breakdown in the moral fiber of our nation. The practice of homosexuality has become more accepted. Many do not have a problem with legalizing same-sex marriages. Many are in support of keeping legal the killing of the unborn child. We think, “something needs to be done. We who stand for Biblical morality should speak out, and get involved, vote, demonstrate for morality so that we can turn things around in this country.

We need to do these things, but I want to suggest to you that there is a bigger issue than getting more people to speak out against same-sex marriages or abortion. The problem in our country and in the world is much bigger than this. The real issue is one of authority. The issue is who has the authority to say what is right and wrong? Is it the president? Is it congress? Is it society at large? Is it the majority of the people? When I ask “Who?” I mean who gets the final say on what is right and wrong? Who has the ultimate right to tell us how to live? Who gets to decide what is moral and immoral? What I want to emphasize on the program today is that God is the sovereign ruler of the universe. He created us and He has all authority, and the solution to the moral decadence of our nation is for us to recognize His sovereignty and for us to completely submit to His rule.

We may think that what is really wrong with our world are these immoral deeds that need to be stopped. These matters are only the fringe, not the heart of it all! What if we solved the abortion problem with our laws—and there were no more abortions? What if practicing homosexuals were driven back into the closet—and they were no longer in the public square? What if all pornography was outlawed and TV, the movies, and the internet were much cleaner? If we could deal with all these things through politics, boycotts and demonstrations, that would make a better America, but we would not have fixed what is really wrong. If we eliminated abortion today—we would have new problems tomorrow.

I fear that some folks may oppose abortion or homosexuality because it is personally repulsive to them. I personally find both of those things to be repulsive. But is that what it is all about—the fact that I personally find them offensive? No. There is a bigger issue. And that is who is in authority that decides what should be offensive? It is God. God alone decides matters of morality.

God is our ultimate authority. He gets to decide because He is God. Our problems as a nation will not be solved until we come to the realization that God is the Lord.

More than 150 times in the Old Testament God declares, “I am the LORD.”

Many of those occasions when God declares He is the Lord are when He gives statutes and ordinances and imposes them on the people. He has the right to impose these laws because He is the LORD. In Leviticus 18:1-5, *“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'I am the LORD your God. According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances. You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.”*  The basis upon which they were to keep His laws was that He is the LORD. When God gave the Ten Commandments to the children of Israel, He began by saying, *“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me…”* and so on (Ex. 20:2 and following) God had the right to command because He was the LORD.

And God proved He is the LORD by fulfilling His promises and showing forth His power. Look in Exodus 6:6-8, God says to Moses, *“Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the LORD.'"* God had the power to deliver them from the Egyptian bondage and he showed forth that power by doing the very thing He promised. This proved He was the LORD.

In Isaiah 44:28, Isaiah the prophet wrote, *“Who says of Cyrus,* [that is God says of Cyrus] *'He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be built,’*

*And to the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid.’”* Isaiah is saying that God says that a man by the name of Cyrus will be His shepherd and He will use him to build Jerusalem and to lay the foundation of the temple. What is interesting about this is that Isaiah lived around a hundred years before Cyrus was ever born. In the days of Isaiah the temple was still standing. Isaiah prophesied this somewhere around 700 BC. The temple was destroyed in 586 BC, about 114 years later. Israel was in captivity for 70 years. In 536 BC Cyrus, the king of Persia allowed the children of Israel to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple, just as Isaiah had prophesied. This was some 160 years after Isaiah made his prophecy. Now Isaiah continues the prophecy in chapter 45. Look at verses 4-7, God is speaking, *“For Jacob My servant's sake, And Israel My elect, I have even called you* [that is Cyrus] *by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting That there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things.'”*

God says, *“I am the LORD, and there is no other.”* and He proves it by His power to predict the future and to fulfill His prediction. It happened just as He said.

God had the right to impose His laws upon them because He is the LORD, and there is no other.

Now, the children of Israel did not keep the commandments of God and God punished them.

In the Book of Ezekiel God uses this phrase “I am the LORD” 67 times. This book is about the Babylonian captivity and why God brought judgment on Judah. Notice what God said to them in Ezekiel 11:10 and 12, *“You shall fall by the sword. I will judge you at the border of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.”* Verse 12, *“And you shall know that I am the LORD; for you have not walked in My statutes nor executed My judgments, but have done according to the customs of the Gentiles which are all around you."'"*

God has the right to declare whatever He wants because He is the LORD. And when man disobeys God, He has the right to punish, because He is the LORD.

Whether we like it or not, the fact is God is, and He is the LORD.

God alone is the sovereign who has the right to do as He wills. He is answerable and accountable to no one. Paul says in Romans 9:20, *“But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why have you made me like this?’”* King David said concerning God, *“Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, The power and the glory, The victory and the majesty; For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, And You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, And You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; In Your hand it is to make great And to give strength to all.”* (1 Chron. 29:11-12) Jesus said in Matthew 28:18, *“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”*

Ultimately, the issue is one of authority. Will men submit to God’s authority or not? Will we let Him define morality or not? Until we realize that this is the issue, we may be doing nothing more than acting on our own preferences—what we find personally offensive and what we personally find acceptable.

Even if our preferences are moral, that’s not enough! It is a question of God’s right to rule! Are we willing to submit to God?

Now, if there is no God, then what people do ultimately makes no difference in the big picture. One could be a homosexual, pedophile, or mass-murderer and it would make no difference because there would be no accounting for anyone. We die and it is over! No judgment day means no accounting for actions; thus, all moral issues become irrelevant!

But if there is a God, then He is LORD, and He has all authority.

Well, there is a God and every person will one day stand before God to give account. Paul says in Romans 14:12, *“So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.”*  Romans 2:6 says that God *“will render to each one according to his deeds.”* We are all accountable to God. The personal question for each of us becomes: Does God rule my life? How can we speak against homosexuality if we ourselves do not submit to God’s authority? You see, if I oppose homosexuality or abortion because **I** find them personally repulsive, but do not oppose other sins against God, such as adultery, taking God’s name in vain, lying, immodesty because I don’t find them repulsive, then who am I submitting to? Who is the final authority for what I do? It is me. And if I claim that right for myself, then how am I different from the practicing homosexual who claims that right for himself?

And so the real issue is not how can we elect more pro-life and pro-family leaders, but how can we turn our nation to respect the authority of God. What should be our mission? It is two-fold. First, we ourselves must personally submit to the authority of God in all things. Seeking to please God and bring glory to Him must be our first priority. God has given us His instructions. It is called the Bible. It can be understood if we will read it and study it with open and honest hearts. And then secondly, we must teach others from God’s authoritative book, seeking to turn their hearts to God. After Jesus said to the apostles, *“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth,”* He then said to them, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* (Matt. 28:18-20) We need to be telling others about God and His authority.

I do not deny that we should speak out against abortion, same sex marriages and other issues and even work toward changing policy to fit what is right. But, our real battle involves the hearts of men—whether or not they will submit to God’s will.

Our time is gone for today, but before we close I want to announce a special series of meetings that will be conducted by the St. James church of Christ in St. James. The time for this series of meetings is April 16-21. Jason Hardin from New Albany, Indiana, will be with us and will present lessons from God’s word, lessons that will help us to be what God wants us to be. That’s April 16-21. We will meet on Sunday morning at 9:30 and 10:15, Sunday evening at 5:00 and then Monday through Friday of that week we will meet at 7:00 each evening. Come and be with us. Our building is located at 685 Sidney Street in St. James where Sidney Street and Highway B intersect.

We also want to invite you to check out our website. On this website you are able to hear sermons on a variety of Bible topics, and you also are able to hear previous Bible Talk radio broadcasts and download transcripts of the programs. The web address is sjchurchofchrist.com, that’s sjchurchofchrist.com.