

THE RELATION BETWEEN CHRIST, BELIEVERS AND AUTHORITIES IN MATTHEW

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Abstract. One can find not too many passages in Matthew which deal with the relation between Christ, his followers and the authorities. When Christ or the believers came into contact with the authorities, usually they ended up persecuted, mistreated, jailed or executed. We examine the encounter of Jesus with Herod, Pharisees, Herodians, Pilate, chief priests, the first and second Roman centurion, and then the meeting of John the Baptist and Joseph of Arimathea with the authorities. There are very rare instances when a representative of the authorities does not abuse of his status and acts as a normal human being. Jesus prepares his disciples for the ill treatment to come and assures them of his help. They have to react during the persecution as the sons of the heavenly Father, they may rejoice in the suffering, knowing that the power of the authorities is finite, and the word of God is endless.

Key words: Christ, believers, authorities, Matthew.

1. Introduction

The term authority (*exousia*) occurs mainly in the New Testament and it is used at least in four different ways. Firstly, authority is the freedom to decide or a right to act without any hindrance. All such authority begins with God and comes from God, for there is no authority except from God (Rom 13,1). Believers have the right to become children of God (John 1,12), and they have freedom with respect to the law (1 Co 8,9). While authority is valueless without the power to make it effective, we can make a fine distinction between the two concepts. This first understanding of authority, then, is distinct from power and refers primarily to a prerogative. Secondly, the concept of authority refers to the power, ability, or capability to complete an action. Jesus was given the authority to forgive sins (Matt 9,6–8) and to drive out spirits (Mark 6,7). Jesus gave seventy(-two) disciples the authority to trample on snakes and scorpions (Luke 10,19). Simon sought power to grant the Holy Spirit (Acts 8,19). Thirdly, the word “authority” is used with reference to delegated authority in the form of a warrant, license, or authorization to perform. Jesus was asked by whose authorization he taught (Matt 21,23). He was granted authority for his ministry from God the Father (John 10,18). Saul was sent to Damascus to persecute Christians by warrant of the priests (Acts 26,12). God