

## Introduction

### Martin Luther

One of Martin Luther's more controversial teachings was his rejection of papal authority. That is, he did not believe the Pope was endowed with any special authority. Pope Leo X issued a document condemning Martin Luther and his teachings. Luther responded by burning the document in public.

In 1521, Emperor Charles V summoned Luther to appear before him in Worms (in Germany). The Holy Roman Empire was united primarily by common theology and Luther was threatening that unity. They sat before Luther a table of his books and asked him, "Are these your writings" and "will you recant them?"

Martin Luther replied "“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason—for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves—I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise.”"

For Martin Luther, the emperor and the pope had limited authority. They may have the authority to kill him, but even that was limited authority. He was only willing to submit to the authority of the Lord. So, he was only willing to listen to Scripture, God's word, not the emperor or the pope.

### Personal Reflection

*Who is the authority in your life?* [Jonah 1:7-16](#) shows us that **no one is beyond God's authority**. That is, I am under God's authority, whether I willingly submit to it or not. Ironically, everyone and everything in [Jonah 1](#) submits to the Lord's authority, except Jonah, the prophet. *Do you live in submission to God's authority? Or do you rebel against Him?* **No one is beyond God's authority.**

This passage addresses two questions. **Why** does the Lord have all authority? And *what is the **extent** of the Lord's authority?*

## The Lord is Creator

First, this passage shows us the **reason** the Lord has all authority. God's authority is not something ascribed to Him by humans. God's authority comes from His own nature and works. [Jonah 1:7-10](#) "7 And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 Then they said to him, "Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?" 9 And he said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." 10 Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, "What is this that you have done!" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them." **The Lord has all authority because He created all things.**

### Casting lots

*How did the sailors discover the reason for the storm?* The sailors cast lots to determine the purpose of the storm. [Jonah 1:7](#) "... "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us..." They viewed the storm's severity as a sign of judgment against someone on board. The lot pointed to Jonah as the cause of this judgment.

*What does the Bible teach about casting lots?* Casting lots refers very broadly to various forms of using chance to determine a decision. Casting lots was a common practice in various cultures during the Old Testament. However, casting lots was not an appropriation of pagan rituals. God commanded Israel to cast lots for certain activities ([Lev 16:8-10](#); [Numb 26:55-56](#)). Casting lots (for both pagans and followers of the Lord) expressed their trust that God would reveal His will. [Proverbs 16:33](#) "33 The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord." Lots were not truly chance ... the Lord controls every circumstance, including lots. There is no circumstance in your life that is outside of God's control.

*Should Christians today cast lots?* it is significant that the last time God's people cast lots was in [Acts 1](#), right before God sent the Holy Spirit to indwell His people. The Holy Spirit guides us. [John 14:26](#) "26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." [John 16:13](#) "13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth ..." We do not seek God's will through casting lots. God has given us His will in **Scripture** and we seek to understand God's will through **prayer**. **The Holy Spirit guides us in all truth by directing us to God's revealed will in Scripture.**

## Jonah

The sailors asked Jonah about himself. [Jonah 1:8](#) “8 Then they said to him, “Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?””

Jonah identifies himself in two ways. First, he calls himself a Hebrew. Abraham was the first in Scripture to be called a Hebrew ([Gen 14:13](#)). The descendants of Abraham referred to themselves primarily as Israel, named after Jacob, whom God renamed Israel. However, in conversations with foreigners, they often were called Hebrews.

Second, Jonah states that he fears the Lord. *What does it mean to **fear** the Lord?* Fear is a reverent respect for God based on His holiness and His justice. Sometimes that fear includes absolute **terror** and other times it is terror toned down by **love**.

According to Scripture, the only way to escape eternal condemnation is through faith in Jesus. [John 3:18](#) “18 Whoever believes in him [Jesus] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” Those who reject Christ should fear their certain eternal condemnation. Those who are in Christ should reverence God as holy, but should not fear His judgment, because Christ has borne your judgment.

Jonah’s claim is a bit ironic. In reality, Jonah **professes** that he fears the Lord, but he does not fear the Lord enough to obey His will.

## Jonah’s God

The **focal point** of the story of this storm at sea is Jonah’s description of the Lord. [Jonah 1:9](#) “... I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.””

Throughout Scripture, a distinctive characteristic of the Lord is that **He alone creates**. [Isaiah 45:12](#) “12 I **made** the earth and **created** man on it; it was my hands that **stretched** out the heavens, and I **commanded** all their host.” [Isaiah 45:18](#) “18 For thus says the Lord, who **created** the heavens (he is God!), who **formed** the earth and **made** it (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): “I am the Lord, and there is **no other**.” [Isaiah 44:24](#) “24 Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: “I am the Lord, who **made** all things, who alone **stretched** out the heavens, who **spread** out the earth **by myself**.””

This is directly contrasted with the false gods that people often worshipped. All other gods are **created**. [Jeremiah 10:11-14](#) “11 Thus shall you say to them: “The gods who **did not make the heavens and the earth** shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens.” 12 It is he who **made the earth by his power**, who **established the world by his wisdom**, and by his understanding **stretched out the heavens**. 13 When he utters his voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, and he makes the mist rise from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain, and he brings forth the wind from his storehouses. 14 Every man is stupid and without knowledge; every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols, for **his images are false**, and **there is no breath in them**.” The Lord is the only true God, because **He alone is the Creator**.

### Jesus is the Creator

It is significant that Scripture teaches that **only the Lord creates** and that **Jesus creates**. [John 1:3](#) “3 All things were made through him [Jesus], and without him was not any thing made that was made.” [Colossians 1:16](#) “16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.” God says of Jesus (the Son) in [Hebrews 1:10](#) “10 And, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands;”

Only the Lord creates; Jesus created everything. *What are the implications of these two statements in Scripture?* Jesus is not a created being. **Jesus is the Creator** of all things. He is the eternal God.

### The sailors' fear

*How did the sailors respond to Jonah's description of the Lord?* [Jonah 1:10](#) “10 Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, “What is this that you have done!” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.”

Jonah had told the sailors he was fleeing from the Lord. Now he tells them that the Lord is “the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land” ([Jon 1:10](#)). Verse 5 describes the sailors as fearing the storm. Now they know they should fear the Lord.

### Summary

**Why does the Lord have all authority?** His authority is not attributed by humans. He is the Creator. He made the seas and dry land. He made the sailors. He made Jonah. The Lord also made you and me. The Lord has all authority in your life and in your circumstances.

## Authority to judge and save

Second, the passage shows us the **extent** of the Lord's authority. He does not have authority over only Israel. He does not have authority over only Jonah. He is the **judge of all the earth**. [Jonah 1:11-16](#) "11 Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?" For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. 12 He said to them, "Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you." 13 Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. 14 Therefore they called out to the Lord, "O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you." 15 So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. 16 Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows." **The Lord has authority over all of creation.**

### Jonah's plan

*How did Jonah suggest they save themselves from the storm?* [Jonah 1:12](#) "12 He said to them, "Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you."” Jonah proposed that they should throw him overboard. The implication of this proposal is that the storm was an act of judgment; therefore, once Jonah was dead, the sailors would be spared.

### The sailor's response

*How did the sailors respond to Jonah's proposal?* First, they rowed toward **dry land** ([Jon 1:13](#)). This is significant for a couple of reasons. They were unwilling to risk taking the life of an **innocent** person, even at his word (cf. [Jon 1:14](#)). In chapter 4, we will read that Jonah was content with all of Nineveh being destroyed. Yet, these men risk their lives to spare Jonah's life although he is unrepentant.

It is also significant because of the **futility** of their effort. They were fleeing the storm at sea, by rowing to dry land. Yet, Jonah has just told them that the Lord "made the sea and dry land" ([Jon 1:9](#)). Even if they made it to dry land, they would not escape the Lord.

Second, the sailors prayed for God's mercy when they threw Jonah overboard. [Jonah 1:14](#) "14 Therefore they called out to the Lord, "O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you." In [Jonah 4:2](#), Jonah acknowledges that the Lord is merciful. **Mercy** refers to "not receiving the consequences we deserve." The sailors do not know the Lord; yet, they hope that He is as merciful as He is powerful. By the way, He is. His power is infinite and His mercy is infinite.

### God's mercy

*What happened when the sailors threw Jonah overboard?* [Jonah 1:15](#) "15 So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging." The sea immediately calmed. This confirmed for them that the storm was the Lord's judgment against Jonah.

The immediate calming of the storm also shaped the sailors' view of the Lord. They feared the storm ([Jon 1:5](#)). When Jonah told them of the Lord's authority, they now fear the Lord, not just the storm ([Jon 1:10](#)). Now that they see God's judgment and his salvation, they fear the Lord in a deeper way ([Jon 1:16](#)). Now, they devote themselves to the Lord and offer Him sacrifices.

### Authority over the sea

*What does the storm show us about the Lord's authority?* [Jonah 1:4](#) "4 But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up." [Jonah 1:15](#) "15 So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging."

I think we should be careful that we don't attribute every storm or natural disaster to God's judgment. There are specific examples in Scripture where storms were just storms, not judgment (e.g., [Mark 4:35-41](#)). However, [Jonah 1](#) shows us that the Lord had full control of the storm. Later in Jonah, we will read that the Lord controls the fish that swallowed Jonah, the growth of a plant, a worm eating the plant, the temperature, and the wind. **The Lord has authority over all creation.**

We read about this authority in [Mark 4:35-41](#) "35 On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." 36 And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. 37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. 38 But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" 39 And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40 He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have

you still no faith?” 41 And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?””

Notice that this storm was not for the purpose of judgment. However, like [Jonah 1](#), the storm risked sinking the boat ([Mark 4:37](#)). The disciples (some of whom were experienced fishermen) feared they would die, like the sailors in [Jonah 1](#) ([Mark 4:38](#)). Jesus told the sea to be still and the storm immediately calmed ([Mark 4:38](#)). *What was the disciples’ conclusion to Jesus calming the storm?* They feared and questioned who He was.

The answer to their question (*Who is this...*) is the same as [Jonah 1:9](#). Jesus is the Lord of heaven who created the sea and dry land. He has created everything; therefore, He has authority over everything. Our response to Jesus should be the same as the sailors in [Jonah 1](#); we should worship Him as the true God.

## Conclusion

[Jonah 1:7-16](#) gives us multiple examples of recognizing authority. The storm submitted to the authority of the Lord. The sailors ultimately submitted to the authority of the Lord. Jonah claimed to fear the Lord, but he was not willing to submit to His authority.

*Have you submitted your life to the Lord through faith in Jesus?* Faith is not a mere profession of belief like we read in [Jonah 1:9](#). Genuine faith is confirmed by devotion - submitting your life to the Lord. If there is no submission, there is no faith.

The Lord has authority over all of creation because He created all things. The question then is not, *Does God have authority over my life?* The question you must answer is, *am I living by faith in submission to the Lord?*

**Closing Scripture:** [Philippians 2:6-11](#) “6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

**No one is beyond God’s authority.**