

## ***LESSON 5 – INCORRECT STANDARDS OF AUTHORITY***

### ***1) INTRODUCTION***

- a) In our previous study, we learned what standard of authority Christians must follow
  - i) It is through the Apostles teaching/doctrine that the Lord instructs His church today – **Acts 2:42**
  - ii) The Apostles teaching/doctrine is found in what call the “New Testament,” which was written so that we might understand God’s will – **Eph 3:4**
  - iii) Everything we need to know to be right with God is found in the New Testament and nothing else was to be revealed afterwards that we would need to hear to attain to “every good work” – **2 Tim 3:16-17; Jude 3**
  
- b) Most believers say that they follow the Apostles doctrine
  - i) However, we will be challenged as believers when one of our cherished beliefs is tested by another believer
  - ii) When this happens and a person cannot establish their belief from the New Testament, the temptation is to appeal to another source of authority outside the New Testament
  - iii) Perhaps the best way to avoid this temptation is to be aware of the incorrect authorities people sometimes use to justify a religious practice
  
- c) There are only two sources of authority man can use:
  - i) **Objective** – this is when we look outside ourselves for authority for what we should do and why we should do it
  - ii) **Subjective** – this is when we look inside ourselves for authority for what we should do and why we should do it
  - iii) In this study, we’re going to briefly touch upon standards of authority that people commonly turn to when questioned about what they believe and why they practice the things they do in Christianity

### ***2) OBJECTIVE STANDARDS OF AUTHORITY***

- a) The Old Testament
  - i) The first thing we need to understand about the OT is that its value for the Christian can not be overstated

**Question 1:** Read **Rom 15:4 & 1 Cor 10:11**. What do these verses tell us about the OT’s value?

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- ii) Given these verses, if I’m to be a faithful Christian in the NT, I must have a good grasp of the OT. It cannot be overstated how important the OT is for the Christian
- iii) However, the bible teaches that the OT, as a standard of authority for religious practices, was designed to be temporary, to fulfill a specific purpose, and was to be replaced as a covenant by the NT

**Question 2:** Read **Gal 3:24-25**. According to vs. 24, what was the design of the OT? According to vs. 25, are we still under it?

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iv) Later on, Paul wrote to the Roman brethren that when those under the Law (the OT) came to Christ, they became dead to the law and were delivered from the Law – **Rom 7:4-6**

**Question 3:** Read **Heb 8:7-13**. According to vs. 7, why did a second covenant have to come? According to vs. 13, what has the old covenant become?

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- v) So on one hand, the OT is a valuable tool as a tutor that provides us perseverance, encouragement, and instruction (**Gal 3:24; 1 Cor 10:11; Rom 15:4**)
- vi) But on the other hand, we are no longer under the OT as a standard of authority because the NT has replaced it
- vii) Understanding this difference is important because many people, when questioned about a practice, are quick to jump to the OT as a source of authority
- viii) For example, there is a constant debate about whether or not God has authorized churches to worship Him with musical instruments. The OT is usually one of the first places believers go to in order to prove they're acceptable to God in worship
- ix) Though a thorough study of musical instruments in worship is outside the scope of this lesson, if arguments are going to be made for their use, it must be made from the NT and not the OT

b) Majority Rule

- i) Many people are involved with a particular denomination or religious practice simply because the majority of people think it is ok

**Question 4:** Read **Matt 7:13-14**. How many people does Jesus say will enter the gate leading to destruction? How many does He say will enter the gate of life?

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- ii) If we would have followed the majority during the days of Noah, we would have perished in the flood
- iii) If we would have followed the majority in the days of Moses and Joshua, we would have perished in the wilderness
- iv) How many people once thought the Earth was flat? Few or many? How many people once thought the Titanic was unsinkable? Few or many?
- v) Point: Christ's teaching requires a level of self-denial and self-sacrifice on the part of the human race that, quite frankly, the majority wants no part of

c) Parents

- i) Many people believe "if it was good enough for mom and dad, it's good enough for me"
- ii) This is understandable since we are raised under the guidance of our parents and we grow up to love, trust, and respect them
- iii) Therefore, for anyone to question the religious judgment of their parents can be a very difficult thing

**Question 5:** Read **Matt 10:37**. If we have two opposing views to consider, one view being what our parents teach and one view being what Jesus teaches, what does Jesus say will happen if we choose our parents?

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- iv) We must remember that even parents can be wrong, and often our wrong (Rom 3:23). We must make sure that we are doing what is right regardless of what our parents may think or believe
  - v) If we discover our parents are in error, loving them requires that we strive to lead them down the correct path
  - vi) Remember, if every generation had simply followed their parents, then we who are Gentiles would still be pagans and idol-worshippers
- d) Preachers
- i) It is also common for people to put their trust in their preacher, priest, or pastor
  - ii) There's something about that "suit", that "robe," that pulpit they stand behind, the voice of authority they preach with, that big toothy white grin, or that title of "Pastor" or "Dr." that makes so many of us think, "There is no way he/she could be wrong!"

**Question 6:** Read **2 Cor 11:13-15**. How do Satan and his servants disguise themselves?

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- iii) This is strong language and we want to be careful before we accuse someone of being "Satan's servant." But what we need to recognize is that just because a person looks righteous and acts righteous doesn't make him righteous
  - iv) In fact, 2 Cor 11 confirms that it's the ones who are like this that we need to be the most careful of
  - v) Our attitude must be like that of Bereans of **Acts 17:11** who "examined the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so"
- e) Creeds & Traditions of Men
- i) This is where most denominations get their authority. Most denominations have a written creed that explaining their beliefs and practices that were written by some counsel that oversees that denomination
  - ii) But creeds are absolutely unnecessary. If they say more than the bible says, they say too much. If they say less than what the bible says, they say too little
  - iii) If a creed says exactly what the bible says, why not just let the bible be our creed book?
  - iv) Unfortunately, though, I have seen many creeds that are filled with man-made traditions and commands that are in direct conflict with the commands of God
- 3) ***SUBJECTIVE STANDARDS OF AUTHORITY***
- a) Conscience
- i) "Let your conscience be your guide" is another popular phrase in our culture. Yet our conscience is not always reliable

**Question 7:** Read **Acts 23:1**. When Paul was persecuting the church, was he doing so with a good conscience?

Yes

No

- ii) The conscience can be a great gift from God when it is used properly. But like all things God has given for our good, it is possible for us to abuse it
- iii) Our conscience must be in line with the Apostles' doctrine. Only then can it be a true guide

b) Human Wisdom

- i) Many feel that through their own wisdom they can determine right from wrong

**Question 8:** Read **Isa 55:8-9**. What do these verses teach us about God's wisdom compared to man's wisdom?

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- ii) One of the most fascinating things about salvation is that God has chosen to save mankind in a manner specifically designed to puzzle those who solely rely on human wisdom – **1 Cor 1:18-29**
- iii) Later on in 1 Cor, Paul taught that the only way for us to know God's will (since our own human wisdom is so deficient) was for God to reveal it to us – **1 Cor 2:9-12**
- iv) He has revealed His will to us through His inspired Apostles', who in turn shared it to us through their writings – **Eph 3:1-5**

c) Feelings

- i) This is perhaps one of the most popular standards upon which people practice what they practice and believe what they believe; whatever I "feel" like
- ii) If it feels right, if it makes us feel good, if it makes us comfortable, if it entertains, we're more prone to do it

**Question 9:** Read **Prov 14:12**. According to this verse, what often results in a death?

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**Question 10:** Read **Prov 28:26**. Who is the fool in this verse?

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- iii) There are many verses scattered throughout scripture telling us that when we start to go by our feelings, we're setting ourselves up for a fall! – **Jer 10:23**