

LESSON 6 – HOW TO APPLY THE CHURCH’S STANDARD OF AUTHORITY

1) INTRODUCTION

- a) To be the church that Jesus built (Matt 16:18), we must understand the proper standard of authority
 - i) The standard of authority Christians must go by is Christ’s will which was given to His apostles
 - ii) His apostles recorded Christ’s will in the pages of our New Testament so that we can know what we must do and must be to please God

- b) There are other standards that people use which are not suitable authorities to lead us to salvation
 - i) The Old Testament, while containing many principles and examples that we can learn by, was the covenant for the Jews. When Christ died for mankind, those commands and ordinances were nailed to the cross (Col 2:13-14) and were replaced with the NT (Heb 8:7, 13)
 - ii) The “majority rule” is not a suitable authority because time has shown that the majority can be wrong and often are wrong. Jesus taught that the “majority” would not make it – **Matt 7:13-14**
 - iii) Parents are not a suitable standard of authority in religion because, like all human beings, they are fallible and capable of being wrong
 - iv) Preachers are not suitable standards of authority because, as much as we admire these men, Jesus and Paul both warned us that many false teachers would come as wolves in sheep’s clothing (Matt 7:15) and disguised as angels of light (2 Cor 11:13-15)
 - v) Creeds and traditions of men are not suitable standards of authority because the NT claims that it is suitable to provide us with every good work – **2 Tim 3:16-17**

- c) In this study, we will discuss two matters related to God’s authority:
 - i) 1st, as Christians, what is our obligation regarding God’s authority?
 - ii) 2nd, how do we use the writings of the New Testament to establish authority for a practice/belief?

2) OUR OBLIGATION

- a) Christians are required to only act by the authority of God. This can be seen through the example of those greater than ourselves

Question 1: Read **John 12:49-50**. Where did Jesus receive His authority from?

Question 2: Read **John 16:13**. Will the Holy Spirit speak of His own authority?

Yes

No

- i) The implication could not be any clearer. If Jesus did not speak/act of his own authority and if the Holy Spirit didn’t speak/act of His own authority, how much surer should we be that the things we do/believe are by the authority of God?
 - ii) Scripture uses very strong and condemning language for those who reject authority and base their practices and beliefs after their own desires! – **2 Pet 2:10; Jude 1:8**
- b) So then what is our obligation?

Question 3: Read **Col 3:17**. In whose name are we to do everything, whether in word or deed? What does it mean to do something in the name of someone else?

- i) This covers everything that we may do or believe in matter of religion. It must be done in the name of (by the authority of) Jesus Christ
 - ii) This is a duty for everyone who would presume to speak for God – **1 Pet 4:11**
- c) This being the case, the burden of proof is on the affirmative, not on the negative
- i) What I mean is this. Nobody has a right to say, “Prove that the Scriptures condemn this practice.” The burden of proof is on the one practicing it to show that they’re doing so by the will of Christ as opposed to the will man
 - ii) Our duty is to examine the scriptures in regards to our practices/beliefs and ensure that there is evidence to support it
 - iii) If we cannot prove it from scripture, the practice is unauthorized, unscriptural, and could endanger our souls
- d) Since the burden of proof is on those who engage in some religious practice or preach some religious belief, how do we establish authority for those practices/beliefs?
- i) Fortunately, there are some basic principles taught by both scripture and that we can understand through common sense that will help us establish authority for any practice/belief we engage in

3) ***HOW AUTHORITY IS ESTABLISHED***

- a) Direct Commands or Precepts
 - i) First of all, we must obey God’s commands

Question 3: Read **Acts 17:30**. What does God command that all people everywhere do?

- ii) We can know we have authority to do/believe something when we have a direct command telling us so.
- iii) However, sometime individuals in the bible are given commands that do not apply to us. Additional efforts must be made to determine the context of the passage on question

Question 4: Read **Rom 16:1-2**. What command does God give the Romans? Must we also follow this command?

- b) Approved Example
 - i) There are lots of examples of men and women acting/behaving certain ways in scripture, both with the approval of God and without the approval of God
 - ii) As Christians we are concerned with mimicking those examples which are approved by faithful men and women of the New Testament

Question 5: Read **1 Cor 11:1**. What does Paul tell us to do? Did he practice what he preached?

Question 6: Read **Phil 4:9**. What does Paul tell us to practice?

- iii) So then whenever we have an example that is taught/practiced with apostolic approval, we know there is authority for the practice
- iv) This is important to remember because when we begin studying in later lessons the organization and worship of the church, we are going to put this into practice

c) Necessary Implication

- i) A necessary implication is something not explicitly taught, yet it is necessarily implied by the clear import and meaning of the language used so that one can draw only one particular conclusion
- ii) Jesus appealed to necessary implication when he reasoned that there must be a resurrection of the dead based upon the implication of God's statement to Moses – **Matt 22:29-33**
- iii) Peter and the Christians in Judea understood the necessary implication of the Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit, that it meant the Gentiles were permitted to be baptized and enjoy the repentance that leads to life – **Acts 10:44-48; 11:15-18**
- iv) The point is, if there is evidence in scripture to warrant it, we may draw certain conclusions through necessary implication

Question 7: Read **Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38; 8:37**. Since belief and repentance are prerequisites for baptism, what does “necessary implication” teach us about the authority of infant baptism?

Question 8: Read **Mark 1:9-10 & Acts 8:38-39**. We do not have any specific command for the mode of baptism (sprinkling, pouring, or immersion). Given these verses, what is the necessarily implied mode and why?

d) Two kinds of authority: specific and general

- i) Some of God's instructions are general and some of them are specific. Determining the difference between the two is important when applying God's standard for authority
- ii) A specific command is when God dictates the precise method or way to go about fulfilling the command in question
- iii) A general command is when God speaks in broad terms and therefore allows multiple ways to fulfill the command in question

Question 9: Read **Gen 6:14a**. What kind of wood did God command Noah to use? Was this a specific or a general command?

Question 10: Read **Mark 16:15**. Did Jesus give a specific or general command regarding the means of traveling to all the world"? How can we as Christians fulfill God's command?

- iv) When we are left to fulfilling a general command, God gives us liberality in how we fulfill these commands
- v) However we must still be wise and use proper judgment in the carrying out of God's commands (Rom 14:13) as we will next discuss

e) Expedients

- i) The term "expedient" means "appropriate to a purpose." Thus, an expedient is an aid that is suitable for carrying out that which God instructs

Question 11: Read **Heb 10:24-25**. In this text, we can use "negative inference" to determine that God commands Christians to assemble together. Discuss some of the more expedient ways to provide a meeting place based on, for example, the number of members?

Question 12: Read **1 Cor 16:1-2**. In this chapter, Christians are commands to give on the first day of the week. Discuss expedient ways to go about carrying out this instruction?

- ii) As with general commands, it is important for us to understand that even when expedients are used, careful judgment must be exercised. It is possible to get out of hand!