

HOW TO ESTABLISH BIBLE AUTHORITY

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Since authority in religion is so controversial, so misunderstood, and so often misapplied and perverted, we are laboring to clarify, explain and apply it to God's glory and man's benefit.
2. All religious problems are either directly or indirectly connected with authority in religion, with some believing, teaching and practicing things for which there is no divine authority, and others refusing to believe, teach and practice things that are divinely authorized.
3. Authority is the right to command or direct and enforce obedience or administer punishment.
4. To authorize a thing is to empower to act or to direct by authority.
5. In divine affairs, in things pertaining to our souls, in serving God in work and worship, all authority inheres in God, the Father, as the ultimate source.
6. The primary difference between the church of Christ and all other religions in the world is the standard of authority by which we are governed and our attitude toward that authority.
 - a. Many in the religious world claim the Bible, even the N.T., as the word of God, and as their standard of authority.
 - b. But many of these same people do not have the proper attitude toward or respect for the authority of it.
 - c. Perhaps the majority of religions claim some authority other than the Bible as their standard.
7. In previous lessons we have established both our need for and the proper source of divine authority in religion, which are revealed to us in the Bible, which reveals what we are to believe, teach and practice, and that we are to have the proper respect for that authority once it has been established.
8. Now we raise and answer the question: How do we establish Bible authority for what we are to believe, teach and practice?
 - a. How does the Bible teach us?
 - b. How does the Bible authorize us to believe a certain thing?
 - c. How does the Bible empower us to act in doing God's will?
 - d. How do we establish what God's will is for us in this age?

II. DISCUSSION

A. THE BIBLE, INCLUDING THE N.T. SCRIPTURES, TEACHES OR AUTHORIZES IN THREE WAYS AND THREE WAYS ONLY.

(To have authority for what we believe, teach and practice, it must be authorized by at least one of these three ways.)

1. It teaches or authorizes by **PRECEPT**, by which we mean direct statement or command, i.e., a direct statement of something that must be done or not done.
 - a. Examples.
 - (1) “Thou shall not kill” or “That shalt do no murder,” Exo.20:13; Mt.19:18; Rom.13:9.
 - (2) “Go...preach the gospel, believe, be baptized,” Mk.16:15,16.
 - (3) All must repent, Lk.13:3; Ac.3:19; 17:30.
 - (4) Repent and be baptized for R. of Sins, Ac.2:38.
 - (5) Lay by in store on 1st day of the week, 1Cor.16:1,2
 - (6) Not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, Heb.10:25.
 - (7) “This do in remembrance of me,” 1Cor.11:26.
 - (8) “Lie not one to another,” Col.3:9.
 - (9) Elders to feed or pastor the flock among them, 1Pet.5:1-3; Ac.20:28.
2. It teaches or authorizes by **APPROVED EXAMPLE**, by which we mean the practice of the saints in the N.T. under the guidance of the apostles of Christ, who had the keys of the kingdom with authority to bind and to loose.
 - a. This is often called approved apostolic example. It is called approved because it meets with God’s approval.
 - (1) There are numerous examples recorded in the Bible that do not meet with God’s approval.
 - (a) Peter’s actions at Antioch, Gal.2:11-14.
 - (b) Ananias’ and Sapphira’s actions in Ac.5:1-11.
 - (c) The church at Corinth and the fornicating brother in 1Cor.5:1-13.
 - (d) The saints at Corinth and their perversion of the Lord’s Supper in 1Cor.11:17,20-22.
 - (e) Simon’s attempt to buy the power of the Holy Spirit in Ac.8:18-24.
 - (2) Things authorized by approved examples under apostolic guidance. Cf. 1Cor.4:16,17; 11:1,2; Phil.4:9.
 - (a) Must have a plurality of elders to oversee each local church, Ac.14:23; 20:28; Phil.1:1; 1Pet.5:1-3.

- (b) Men must be qualified before they can be appointed to serve as elders, 1Tim.3:1-7; Tit.1:5-9.
 - (c) Saints are to assemble on the 1st day of the week, Ac.20:7; Cf. 1Cor.16:1,2.
 - (d) The Lord's Supper eaten on the 1st day of each week, Ac.20:7.
3. The Bible teaches or authorizes by **NECESSARY IMPLICATION**, by which we mean something that is neither expressly stated nor specifically exemplified, yet is necessarily implied by the clear import and meaning of the language used.
- a. When something is necessarily implied, we are forced to a certain conclusion by the clear import and meaning of the language used. It is the conclusion that is necessary. Examples:
 - (1) The Israelites were to keep each Sabbath day holy, Exo.20:8. The language demanded it by necessary implication.
 - (2) When Jesus was baptized he went down into the water, necessarily implied, Mt.3:16.
 - (3) Lord's Supper to be eaten on every 1st day of the week, Ac.20:7; Cf. Exo.20:8.
 - (4) Saints to lay by in store on every 1st day of the week, 1Cor.16:1,2.
 - (5) Saints must meet on the 1st day of the week for the Lord's Supper. Other things may be done any day.
 - b. Notice, we emphasize "necessary implication," not simply "implication" or "inference;" for not all implications, inferences or conclusions are necessary. Examples:
 - (1) Some erroneously infer infant baptism from the household baptisms of Ac.16:14,15, 30-33.
 - (a) This is not a necessary inference, but a forced one, an erroneous one.
 - (b) There are many households without infants.
 - (c) Note the false assumptions one would have to make in order to get infants in Lydia's household.
 - (d) Besides, in each case they were **taught** and required to **believe**, neither of which an infant can be or do!

- (2) Some read of “love feasts” or “feasts of charity” and erroneously infer church kitchens, banqueting facilities and church suppers from Jude 12. Cf. 1Cor.11:20-22,34.
4. From these 3 ways we learn that the N.T. Scriptures teach or authorize what we are to believe, teach and practice in religion both explicitly (to declare plainly) and implicitly (resting on a necessary implication or inference; an inference not expressed but understood).
 - a. Explicitly, i.e., by precept or direct statement or command, and by approved example.
 - b. Implicitly, i.e., by necessary implication.
5. These three ways or methods illustrated by the authority for the Lord’s Supper.
 - a. First note this about the Lord’s Supper.
 - (1) No single command gives all the details regarding the observance of the Lord’s Supper on the 1st day of the week.
 - (2) We must study everything God’s word says on the subject to discover this and the pattern of authority for its observance.
 - (3) The sum of God’s word is truth, Psa.119:160.
 - (4) We need neither more nor less than what God has revealed, Deut.4:2; 12:32; 1Cor.4:6; 1Pet.4:11; Rev.22:18,19.
 - (5) The sum of God’s word on the Lord’s Supper is the truth on it and the divine pattern for it.
 - b. The **OBSERVANCE** of the Lord’s Supper is authorized by **precept** or **direct statement** or **command**: “This do in remembrance me,” 1Cor.11:23-25.
 - (1) Also, we learn **what** to eat and drink (**the elements**) in observing the Lord’s Supper by direct statement, Mt.26:26-28; Lk.22:17,18.
 - (2) But there is no direct statement or command telling us **when** to eat the Lord’s Supper.
 - c. The **TIME** of the observance or **WHEN** to eat the Lord’s Supper is authorized by **APPROVED EXAMPLE**: “And upon the first day of the week, **when** the disciples come together to break bread,” Ac.20:7.
 - (1) That is the only reference to the time when or the day on which the disciples met to break bread.

- (2) We know we have Bible authority for it on the 1st day of the week. (None for any other day!)
 - (3) To break bread on any other day would be to do it in the absence of any divine instructions to do so, or to act without authority from the Lord.
 - (4) The time of the gathering or meeting is also learned in this way – the 1st day.
 - (5) Paul an apostle had received instructions concerning this memorial institution from the Lord, 1Cor.11:23. He, therefore, knew when the Lord wanted the disciples to observe it in memory of him.
- d. The **FREQUENCY** of the observance of the Lord’s Supper, or how often it was to be observed, is authorized by **NECESSARY IMPLICATION** or **INFERENCE**: Ac.20:7; Cf. Exo.20:8.
- (1) If the language of Exo.20:8 concerning keeping the Sabbath day holy means as often or as regularly as the 7th day, or the Sabbath day, comes – then, “the first day of the week to break bread” means every “first day,” as often as it comes.
 - (2) If it doesn’t mean “every first day of the week,” which “1st day” does it mean?
 - (3) This is the “unavoidable implication of the clear import and meaning of the language used.”
 - (4) There is no other way to determine how often the Lord authorized this memorial supper to be observed in remembrance of him.
 - (5) Moreover, when a thing is to be observed only one time per year, the month and the day of the month must be specified. Examples:
 - (a) One’s birthday.
 - (b) One’s wedding anniversary.
 - (c) American Independence Day, July 4th.
 - (6) Things to be observed one time each month must be specified by the day of the month. Examples:
 - (a) Rent due; house or car payment; one’s salary, when paid once per month. (1st or 15th, etc.
 - (7) For a weekly observance, only the day of the week need be specified. Examples:

- (a) “The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God,” Exo.20:10.
- (b) The Lord’s Supper: “the first day of the week,” Ac.20:7.
- (c) Lay by in store: “upon the first day of the week,” 1Cor.16:1,2.
- e. The hour on the 1st day of the week when the Lord’s Supper is to be observed is by **EXPEDIENCY** – more on this later when we study “The Doctrine of Expediency”.

III. CONCLUSION

1. We use these same 3 methods in every day life with our children. Illus.
2. I well remember how excited I was when I first learned this, i.e., how to use the Scriptures to establish Bible authority for what we are to believe, teach and practice.
3. Without this scriptural method of establishing Bible authority, we are simply left with the practice of assuming something is authorized or unauthorized and thus guided by human opinion and human tradition and not by a “thus saith the Lord,” or “book, chapter and verse.”
4. In application of what we have established about Bible authority for a practice, I ask, Where is the authority for church supported or operated:
 - a. Day nurseries?
 - b. Kindergartens?
 - c. Secular schools and colleges?
 - d. Institutional benevolent homes, AKA “Orphan Homes” or “Children’s Homes”?
 - e. Hospitals, Unwed Mother’s Homes and Clinics?
 - f. Family Life Centers, gymnasiums, recreation halls, ball teams and banquets?
 - g. Businesses, farms, apartment buildings for senior citizens and nursing homes?
5. The authority for the preceding and the following things is from men, not from heaven:
 - a. Sprinkling or pouring for baptism.
 - b. Infant baptism and Infant membership.
 - c. Burning incense in worship.
 - d. Sprinkling of holy water.
 - e. Counting of beads in prayer.
 - f. Bowing before images.
 - g. Mechanical instruments of music in worship.

- h. One eldership with oversight in two or more churches or any part thereof.
- i. Women preachers, elders, deacons.
- j. Coke or coffee and doughnuts on the Lord's table.
- k. Confessing sins to a priest.
- l. Salvation before and without baptism for the remission of sins.
- m. Calling preachers "Reverend".
- n. Majority rule in the church.
- o. Minority rule in the church.
- p. Men's business meetings with congregational oversight.
- q. Church sponsored recreation.
- r. Church sponsored social meals.
- s. Mourner's bench for praying through to salvation.
- t. Church contributing to a missionary society; Red Cross, etc.
- u. One eldership becoming a Sponsoring Eldership for a brotherhood work or for a plurality of churches.