

## *Seeking Biblical Authority, Lesson 5: How Does the Bible Authorize?*

Subject: Authority

Aim: to show that the Bible authorizes explicitly and implicitly.

1. Some may wonder why be concerned about such? Why not just let folks hold their own beliefs and be happy? In reality such an attitude is unrealistic and unwise. This is a vital and important matter to study.
2. In this lesson we will first ask how important the study is.
3. Then we will consider some basic ideas on how the Bible Authorizes.

### I. How important is this question?

#### A. Our eternal soul and destiny hangs in the balance

1. Matthew 7:13-14, 21-23
2. Let's ask a couple of folks how important it is
  - a. Nadab & Abihu Leviticus 10:1-2.
  - b. King Saul, 1 Samuel 15.

#### B. It becomes practical when we ask what would please God in worship and life?

1. Are we sentenced to chaos & confusion in such matters?
2. Are we destined to be adrift in a sea of subjectivism - where anyone's opinion is as good as another?
3. That has been the result of hundreds of years of using an approach that says Bible is not a pattern! Such is a futile and frustrating approach.

### II. Let's look at some basic ideas again.

#### A. Let's read some verses:

1. Acts 17:11. What were they looking for?
2. 1 Timothy 3:14-17. What do scriptures provide?
3. 2 Peter 1:2-4. What does knowledge provide?
4. The role of human reason should not be discounted. God expects us to THINK!
5. God gave us our minds, man is a rational creature and God expects us to reason about religion.
6. Consider: Acts 17:1-4, Acts 18:4, 1 Peter 3:15.
7. There are no commands directed specifically at me. I must reason about them, Acts 17:30.

#### B. Remember

1. God's word can be understood!
2. God's word is to be followed.
3. Note: God has the right to make demands on us - his love dictates the nature of those demands!

### III. How does the Bible authorize?

#### A. The Bible authorizes by explicit teaching.

1. Illustrated by God's commands to Moses, Exodus 26:30, 40:16ff.
2. New Testament examples:
  - a. Mark 16:15-16.
  - b. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.
  - c. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2
4. Look at Mark 16. Some aspects of the explicit teaching is
  - a. Specific: what should we preach? The Gospel is specified.
  - b. Generic: How should we go? Anyway possible, nothing is specified.

B. The Bible also authorizes by implicit teaching. It doesn't come out and say it, rather it is left to our reason to infer it. A speaker or writer implies, we infer.

1. Here is where difficulties sometimes arise. Problem is not with implication, but with our ability to infer.
2. Some examples:
  - a. Hebrews 20: 25 implies: A place (by expediency a building), a time, an order.
  - b. Ephesians. 5:19, Colossians 3:16 implies a song (tune, words), by expediency a book, a leader.
  - c. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 implies a standing treasury, a treasurer, some means of taking the collection.
3. Special note: something not authorized cannot be an expedient. All that is necessary to fulfill God's expectation is authorized.

C. The Bible also authorizes by approved precedent or example

1. 1 Corinthians 11:23-29. How often is "as often as you do this"?
2. By example we learn: Acts 20:7.
3. How is congregational support of mission work authorized?
4. By example we learn: Philippians 4:15-16.

IV. But what do we do when the Bible is silent on a matter? What about those things not specifically condemned or approved?

A. Some use the defense of many actions that are questioned, "But God doesn't say not to".

1. A better question: Does God authorize it?
2. God knew impracticality of given a "rule" book to cover every possible contingency and situation.

B. What about those things neither specifically commanded nor condemned?

1. Is the silence of the scriptures: inclusive - does it permit - OR - exclusive - does it prohibit?
2. Difference is night and day!

C. Let us allow the Bible to answer

1. Leviticus 10:1-2. "Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. (NIV). What was commanded? Leviticus 16:1-2.
2. Joshua 6:10. What was commanded? Joshua 6:1-5.
3. Hebrews 7:12-14. What was commanded? Exodus 28 and a multitude of passages.

D. The principle stated, illustrated.

1. God authorizes what He wants and then is silent.
2. Illustrated:
  - a. Noah & ark, Genesis 6:22.
  - b. Moses & tabernacle, Exodus 26:30, 40:16.
3. In everyday life - a "Thou shalt not isn't needed"
  - a. A teen aged boy sent to the store who went for an hour's drive with friends. Would a defense of "Yeah, but you didn't say not to" work?
  - b. A prescription authorizes only what is prescribed and does not have to specifically exclude all other drugs.
  - c. The child's game: Simon says. Only authorized to do what Simon says. How can we see the principle in a child's game, but not when it comes to the word?

E. Consider the matter of music in worship.

1. The command and example is to sing, not make music, Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16, 1 Corinthians 14:15.
2. That he did not say "Thou shalt not" is not the issue.
3. Is instrumental music necessary to sing? No! it is another form of music.
4. Some would say it is an aid, an expedient, like a songbook.
5. But a songbook, like a building, a baptistery, Bible classes, the invitation song, etc. is authorized because it aids doing the thing authorized.
6. Something cannot be expedient that is not authorized and lawful.

1. In Matthew 21:23 the Jews asked Jesus: "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?"

2. Let us make sure we are asking, seeking Bible authority for all we do and believe.

Michael D. Greene

Elizabethtown church of Christ