
necessarily implies Abraham, Isaac and Jacob though dead were alive and awaiting the resurrection.

The apostle Paul also taught by necessary inference from the Scriptures. Paul necessarily inferred the Father is excepted from Christ's rule. "For 'He has put all things under His feet.' But when He says 'all things are put under Him,' it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted" (1 Cor. 15:27). Paul also necessarily inferred Christ could not be a priest under the Law of Moses. "For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood" (Heb. 7:14).

Christ directly commands us to follow His commands and example and the commands and example of His apostles. Since their examples include drawing necessary inferences from God's Word, then we should follow their example and do likewise.

Principles Applied: Lord's Supper

We have seen three principles or means of establishing authority from the Scriptures. Let's see how these three principles apply to one element of worship, the Lord's Supper.

Christ gave his disciples a direct command to partake of the Lord's Supper. Paul wrote, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

The time of partaking the Lord's Supper is authorized by the approved example of an apostle of Christ. "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them..." (Acts 20:7). The frequency of partaking the Lord's Supper every first day of the week is learned by necessary inference from Acts 20:7 (See, Ex. 20:8; Lk. 4:16).

General and Specific Authority

General authority is when God gives a command, example or necessary inference, but he does

not specify the method or means of carrying out His will. For example, the command "Go" (Mt. 28:19) does not specify how, thus it authorizes any method of going: walking, riding, flying, sailing or etc. "Teach" (Mt. 28:19) does not specify how, thus we can use public, private, class or other methods. "Assemble" (Heb. 10:25) does not specify the place. We can meet in a home, a rented hall, an owned building or other kind of place. The command "Sing" (Eph. 5:19) does not specify the part, so we can use book or sing by memory. We can sing different parts.

Specific authority identifies God's commands that specifies the method or means of carrying out His will. When God commanded Noah to use "gopher wood" to build the ark (Gen. 6:1), the kind of wood was specified. The specific wood excluded all other kinds of wood were excluded: walnut, pine, ash, spruce, etc. "The ashes of a red heifer" (Num. 19:2), specifies the kind of animal and the color. All other kinds of animals are excluded: sheep, goat, pig, horse, camel or whatever. Likewise, all other colors of heifers are excluded: white, black, brown or spotted.

When Christians are commanded to "sing" in worship to God (Eph. 5:19), the kind of music is specified. All other kinds of music excluded. The specific authority for the Lord's Supper on "first day of the week" and the elements to be taken (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23), excludes all other days and all other foods. The local congregation is the kind of organization specified for Christians (Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1) all other kinds of organization are excluded. The scope of the oversight of elders is specified to the "flock among you" (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2). Anything outside this scope is excluded. The church is authorized to relieve "needy saints" (1 Tim. 5:16; Acts 6). Since the kind of person is specified, all other persons are excluded: needy non-saints, saints not in need.

The proper authority, what is authorized and what is not authorized can be determined from God's Word with the proper principles and application of these principles. They are not difficult to understand or apply. The problem is simply obeying the Lord's authority by doing what the Lord has instructed in the way the Lord has directed.

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"teaching them to
observe all things that
I have commanded you"

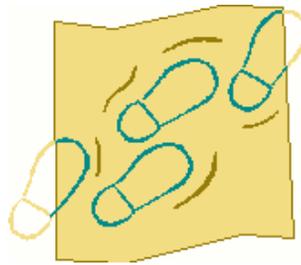
Matthew 28:20

Establishing Authority



Wayne Greeson

Establishing Authority



All those who seek to serve and please God will follow His authority in their daily lives and in the work, worship, organization and all aspects of the church. The proper chain of all authority in religion begins with God. The Father gave authority to Jesus Christ, who in turn, gave authority to His apostles to teach His will. The apostles committed the authorized will of Christ to the writings of the New Testament (See, "By What Authority" by Wayne Greeson).

But not everything within the New Testament is intended to establish authority. Some portions are simply statements of fact, some convey background information and some portions are authoritative instruction meant to tell us what is lawful or authorized for us to do. What are the principles upon which we can establish authority from the New Testament?

By Direct Command

Any parent and all children recognize the authority of a direct command. A parent gives a child authority to act by issuing a direct command to "Clean your room" or "Wash the car." Likewise, the most obvious and direct means of authority Christ gives us is by a direct command. Christ's direct commands are expressions of God's divine authority for his children to act or refrain from acting.

Jesus described his divine authority and impressed the necessity of obedience to all His commands. "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you'" (Mt. 28:18-20). Our obedience to the authority of Christ's commands is not only necessary but also to be complete.

One's love for Christ is shown by submission to Christ's authority, that is obeying His commandments. Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments. ... He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him" (Jn. 14:15, 21; Jn. 15:10, 14; 1 Cor. 7:19).

Examples of Christ's authorizing commands we

are to obey include: "love one another" (Jn. 13:34), "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mk. 16:16) and "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. 11:24).

As Christ gave his apostles the authority to proclaim His will and commands, the direct commands of Christ's apostles are also to be obeyed as authoritative. The apostle John said we must listen to the apostles' commands, "We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (1 Jn. 4:6). The apostle Paul wrote, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle" (2 Thess. 2:15). Those who do not submit to the apostles' authority and commands are to be rejected. "And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed" (2 Thess. 3:14).

Examples of the apostles' authorizing commands we are to obey include: "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife..." (1 Tim. 3:2), "abstain from sexual immorality" (1 Thess. 4:3) and "Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number..." (1 Tim. 5:9).

By Approved Example

Direct commands are not the only way parents might authorize and instruct their children to act. Parents often tell their children, "Do what I do," or "Follow my example." Most teenagers learn to drive by watching their parents' example. Likewise, Christ instructs and authorizes His disciples by His example and the approved example of His apostles.

Christ gave us a direct command to follow His example: "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (Jn. 13:15). The apostle Peter emphasized our need to follow Christ's example. "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). Christ's example teaches us how to be obedience, how to pray, humble, loving and many other things.

The character and acts of the apostles also serve as authoritative examples, when those examples are "ap-

proved" by Christ's will. Paul commanded disciples to follow his approved example. "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you" (1 Cor. 11:1-2).

Paul's example serves as a pattern. "Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern" (Phil. 3:17). Following the example of the apostles is necessary to have God. "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you" (Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 1:6-7).

Those who do not follow the apostles' example are to be withdrawn from. "But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us" (2 Thess. 3:6-9).

By Necessary Inference

The third and final way the Lord instructs and authorizes his disciples to act is called "necessary inference." Some acts are not authorized by a direct command or an approved example, yet are necessarily implied by the clear import and meaning of the language used leading to a necessary conclusion. A parent who gives the car keys to his teenager and commands, "Go get a loaf of bread and a gallon of milk" has given authority by necessary inference to his teenager to drive the car to the store. Neither the car nor the store are explicitly mentioned by the parent but they are clearly and necessarily implied.

While some question the validity of necessary inference as a means of establishing authority, both Jesus and his apostles used necessary inference to draw doctrinal conclusions from the Scriptures. In argument with the Sadducees, Jesus established the doctrine of the resurrection by necessary implication from God's words to Moses at the burning bush. "But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Mt. 22:31-32, 23-33). The verse Jesus quoted does not explicitly refer to the resurrection, but it

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