

## Lesson 2: *Recognition of Bible Authority*

The authority of God in men's lives has always been an important principle, but one just as often neglected or ignored. Bible authority for the church and its individual members is established on the pages of the New Testament, but many important lessons can be gleaned from an examination of the Old Testament as well.

### **Bible Authority in the Old Testament**

A classic lesson is learned from God's command to Noah to build the ark. The Lord specified that his servant should use gopher wood, without explicitly prohibiting other types of wood. Noah, recognizing the authority and wisdom of the Lord, used gopher wood and "did according to all that God commanded him" (Gen. 6:22). God does not have to condemn things explicitly for when he has explicitly commanded one thing, all else is necessarily excluded.

Good intentions do not negate the power of God's authority either. In 2 Samuel 6, Uzzah reached out his hand to catch a toppling ark of the covenant and was struck dead on the spot for his well-intentioned transgression.

Neither can personal preference ascend God's authority. In Leviticus 10, Nadab and Abihu offered God worship in a way that he had not specified, but which evidently appealed to these priests. Their incense was called "perverse" because God "had not commanded them."

The primary authority for worship and life in the Old Testament was the law of Moses, delivered at Sinai in the form of the ten commandments and many subsequent regulations.

### **Bible Authority in the New Testament**

Jesus asserted his privilege to total authority over his disciples just before his ascension into heaven: "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18). James concurred that there was "one lawgiver for the church" (4:12). And so we also heed the decree of Peter that "if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11).

Christians must recognize the authority of the written word revealed in the New Testament as an infallible expression of God's will. Many denominations resort to creeds, which originated as attempts to express what certain groups interpreted the New Testament to mean. After one or two centuries however, most of these artificial creeds have mutated further and further away from the Bible. Many, for instance, are condoning homosexuality and unscriptural marriages, things clearly condemned in the New Testament (1 Cor. 6, Matt. 19). Catholicism openly admits that it does not consider the Bible as a sole authority and relies instead on oral tradition handed down by her popes. Catholicism often finds itself contradicting the Bible (Matt. 23).

In Lesson Eight, we will examine the place of the Old Testament in the understanding of the church. Suffice it for now to say that the Old Testament authority has been taken away (Eph. 2:14-16) and only authority found in the testament of Christ is fit to direct us.

### **Hermeneutics**

Bible authority for the work and worship of the church, as well as the actions of the individual can be established by studying the New Testament. Anything that is commanded is obviously authorized. For instance, Jesus commanded the apostles take the gospel into the whole world (Matt. 28:19-20). Secondly, any approved example is also authorized. We find the early disciples partook of the Lord's supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Finally, any inference that must necessarily be made is also authorized. In order to fulfill the great commission, we must infer that some means of transport be used (foot, boat, car, plane, etc.).

1. What principle can be gleaned from Noah's obedience to God's command to build the ark with gopher wood? How might this principle affect the way we view God's command to sing in Ephesians 5:19?
  
2. Does the fact that God did not explicitly forbid milk and cookies in the Lord's Supper allow us to make the substitution? Why, or why not?
  
3. What are some examples of things done in the name of religion that are defended against questions of authority as being good works, too good to neglect? How does the case of Uzzah affect this principle?
  
4. What things are done in the name of religion that can only be traced to personal preference, rather than scriptural mandate? What does the case of Nadab and Abihu add to this concept?
  
5. Summarize what each of the following passages contributes to an understanding of Bible authority:
  - a. Matthew 28:18:
  - b. Matthew 15:7-9:
  - c. James 4:12:
  - d. 1 Peter 4:11:
  - e. Col. 3:17:
  
6. Why are denominational creeds unnecessary? What does Catholicism claim as an additional authority to the Bible?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. Why is it improper to appeal to the Old Testament to use instrumental music, animal sacrifice and the burning of incense (Gal. 5:3, James 2:10)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Give an example of a direct command as authority in the New Testament.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Give an approved example as authority for action in the New Testament.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. Give an example of necessary inference as authority in the New Testament.