

Lesson Thirteen: Rules of Interpretation V

The Limit of Divine Revelation

15. **Know the limit of divine revelation.** One must be able to ascertain the exact limit of all that God has said. One must only operate in the realm in which God has spoken, His divine authority.

The Old Testament Has No Authority Today

We are not guided by the Old Testament today. It has served its purpose (Galatians 3:24-27) and was fulfilled by Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:17). It has been “taken...out of the way.” (Colossians 2:14)

No practices or doctrines of the Old Law are to be used today to justify any practices in religion. To do so, causes one to be severed from Christ. (Galatians 5:4)

The Old Testament does serve to teach us about Jesus (John 5:39) and to provide examples, both positive and negative, for us to emulate or abstain from. (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11)

The New Testament Is Our Authority Today

The New Testament is our authority today because it contains the word of Christ (John 12:48; Hebrews 1:1-2), the one who possesses all authority (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:22-23). His words provide all things necessary for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3) and thoroughly furnish us to every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Therefore, all is to be done in His name, i.e., by His authority (Colossians 3:17).

How the New Testament Instructs

The authority of Christ is expressed in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9). The doctrine of Christ is the perfect, complete revelation of God’s will in the gospel, the New Testament. (Hebrews 1:1-2)

The authority of Christ teaches us in three ways: 1) Direct command or statement; 2) Approved example or precedent; 3) Necessary inference or implication.

Direct Command or Statement

This is a direct statement of something that must or must not be done. Acts 2:38 is an example of this type of teaching.

The command or statement can either be specific (Ephesians 5:19) or general (Matthew 28:19). Specific commands exclude all things not specified. General commands include everything that is necessary to carrying out the general command.

Approved Example or Precedent

This is the example of the practice of the New Testament church under the guidance of the apostles (Philippians 4:9), who in turn taught and practiced what they received from the Lord. (1 Corinthians 11:1) We do not follow every example for many of them are purely incidental.

Necessary Inference or Implication

A necessary inference or implication is something that is not expressly stated nor specifically exemplified, yet necessarily implied or inferred by the clear import and meaning of the language used.

A good illustration of this is Hebrews 10:25. In this passage an assembly is commanded. This verse does not mention a place to assemble but one must necessarily infer that people cannot assemble without some place at which to meet.

Questions for Review and Discussion

1. What are some things which necessitated changing from the Old Law to the New?
2. What is said of a person who today tries to justify his religious practices by the Old Law?
3. Why, in relation to Scripture, is it important to remember that Jesus possesses all authority in heaven and on earth?
4. Analyze Acts 15:1-21 to see how the first century church determined whether or not the rite of circumcision was an authorized religious practice. Explain what you find.
5. Why are some New Testament examples binding while others are not?
6. Illustrate a necessary implication by using Scripture.

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