

# AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

## Col. 3:17

### INTRODUCTION

1. I can think of no subject more important to a people who wish to serve and please God.
2. Because man can only please God when he walks by Divine authority -- Matt. 7:23; 2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:6
3. Authority is the right to command or direct and enforce obedience, or administer punishment.
4. In divine affairs, ALL AUTHORITY inheres in God-- John 17:8; Mat. 28:18

### I. IN THE LAST DAYS, OR THE GOSPEL AGE, GOD HAS GIVEN TO CHRIST ALL AUTHORITY

1. Matt. 28:18
2. Christ is God's lawgiver to His people today -- James 4:12; Heb. 1: 1 - 2; Eph. 1: 22 - 23; Matt. 17:5
3. Christ was given this authority when God raised him from the dead -- Eph. 1: 18 - 23; Matt. 28: 18
4. Christ will have this authority until He comes again -- I Cor. 15: 20 - 26
5. All authority is NOW in the hands of Christ -- this includes:
  - (1) LEGISLATIVE -- makes the laws.
  - (2) EXECUTIVE -- enforces the law.
  - (3) JUDICIAL -- interprets the law and determines its application
6. Any man that goes beyond this authority is under the curse of God -- Gal. 1: 6 - 9; II John 9 - 11; I Cor. 4:6
7. There is NO divine authority for any teaching or practice unless it is taught by some means in some passage in the Word of God.
8. What the Bible does not teach cannot be the will of God, or approved by Him as part of the religion of Christ.
9. We must be able to find it taught by PRECEPT, APPROVED EXAMPLE or NECESSARY INFERENCE in some passage of Scripture.
10. The SILENCE OF THE BIBLE is to be respected as much as its revelation -- I Cor. 4:6; II John 9 - 11; I Pet. 4:11

### II. CHRIST GAVE BINDING AND LOOSING AUTHORITY ONLY TO HIS APOSTLES

1. Matt. 16: 19; 18:18; John 20: 22 - 23; II Cor. 5: 18 - 20
2. The Holy Spirit guided them in what they did:
  - (1) In what THEY SAID -- Matt. 10: 19 - 20; Acts 2: 1 - 4; I Cor. 2: 11 - 13; John 16:13; 14:26
  - (2) In what THEY WROTE -- I Cor. 14:37; Eph. 3: 3 -5; I John 5:13; Col. 4:16
  - (3) The message WAS CONFIRMED by miracles -- Mark 16: 15 - 20; Heb. 2: 3 ,4; II Cor. 12:12; John 20: 30 - 31
3. Proper respect for the authority of Christ can be shown only by respecting the "authority" of the apostles -- Matt. 19:28

### III. THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST IS EXERCISED BY THE APOSTLES COMPLETELY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

1. The scriptures are perfect and complete, therefore sufficient -- II Pet. 1:3; II Tim. 3: 16 - 17; Jude 3
2. We are forbidden to go beyond the Scriptures -- Gal. 1: 6 - 9; II John 9 - 11; I Cor. 4:6
3. We must follow the apostolic pattern -- Phil. 3: 17; 4:9; I Cor. 11:1

### IV. LET US STUDY THE THREE METHODS OF RECEIVING DIVINE AUTHORITY:

#### 1. PRECEPT, or direct statement or positive command

(1) A direct statement might be:

1. A command -- Acts 2:38; 17:30; Luke 13:3; Eph. 5:19
2. A prohibition -- I John 2:15; Heb. 10:25
3. A declarative statement -- Gal. 5: 16 - 26

(2) Jesus used direct statements or commands in the sermon on the mount -- Matt. 5 - 7

(3) Other examples of the direct statement:

1. The Lord's Supper observance -- I Cor. 11 : 25
2. Baptism -- Acts 10: 48
3. Unity -- I Cor. 1 :10

#### 2. NECESSARY INFERENCE

(1) Necessary inference is that which must be true, even though it is not stated.

(2) It is clearly implied by the things which are said.

(3) Jesus used this means to answer the Sadducees and teach the fact of the resurrection of the dead -- Matt. 22 :31 - 32

1. Note the facts expressed:

(1) "*I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac*"

(2) "*God is not the God of the dead but of the living*"

(3) The only inference they could draw was that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are living.

(4) If living, there is a life after death -- hence a resurrection.

(4) Jesus used parables and the spiritual application is inferred -- Matt. 13: 45 - 46

(5) Christ's baptism inferred that He went in the water -- Matt. 3:16

(6) By inference, the Bible teaches the church was established on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ -- Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:4

(7) By inference the frequency of the observance of the Lord's Supper is established -- Acts 20:7

1. Compare: "*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy*"--Ex. 20:8, and "*The first day of the week to break bread*" --Acts 20:7

2. If the "*Sabbath day to keep it holy*" means every Sabbath, "*The first day of the week to break bread*" means every first day.

3. DIVINELY APPROVED EXAMPLE -- the practice of the church under apostolic guidance.

(1) The Holy Spirit recorded select instances of divinely approved actions to illustrate what God would have us to do.

(2) The Scriptures claim to teach by EXAMPLE:

1. Heb. 13: 7
2. II Thess. 3: 7, 9
3. III John 11
4. I Cor. 4: 16 - 17; 11:1
5. I Thess. 1:6
6. Phil. 4:9
7. I Cor. 10: 6, 11; I Pet. 2:21

(3) GUIDELINES to help us know when an example is a required example:

1. THE RULE OF UNITY OR HARMONY

- (1) Jesus gave this rule in John 17: 20 -21
- (2) If an example is required of us, it must harmonize with all other teaching on that subject in the New Testament.
- (3) The teaching of express statements, approved examples and necessary inferences is never conflicting.

2. THE RULE OF UNIFORMITY

(1) Uniformity in essential details must be present in examples of the same kind of action.

(2) EXAMPLES:

1. Conversion: In every case of conversion in the New Testament, the subject was baptized -- there is not a case on record of a person's being saved without baptism.
2. Lord's Supper:
  - (1) The day -- first day -- Acts 20:7
  - (2) In an assembly -- Acts 20:7; I Cor. 11: 17 - 34
3. One church helping another church:
  - (1) Acts 11: 26 - 30
  - (2) I Cor. 16: 1 - 2; II Cor. 8:14; Rom. 15: 25 - 27

3. THE RULE OF UNIVERSAL APPLICATION

- (1) No example is to be regarded as reflecting the will of God which is not susceptible of universal application.
- (2) The gospel is universal -- Mark 16: 15 - 16; Rom. 2:11
- (3) Baptism in water is a good illustration of this matter -- water is essential to life.
- (4) The Lord's Supper
  1. Grapes grow all over the world.

2. Grain grows all over the world.

#### 4. THE RULE OF LEGITIMATE EXTENSION

(1) No example is to be extended beyond its legitimate province.

(2) If the action be an emergency situation, it is not to be extended to include normal or regular action.

##### 1. EXAMPLES:

(1) The Jerusalem church -- members sold "*their possessions and goods*" -- Acts 2: 45

(2) I Cor. 7 was written in view of the present distress -- I Cor. 7:26

(3) In New Testament scriptures one church never contributed to another church unless that church was in need-- Acts 11: 26 - 30; II Cor. 8:14

#### 5. THE LAW OF MATERIALITY

(1) Whether a thing is relevant, material, or essential to the teaching or practice of God's will is a most important consideration.

(2) Incidental circumstances need to be separated from divine law in anything taught in God's Word.

##### (3) EXAMPLES:

1. Where one is baptized is incidental -- a natural stream, artificial pool or reservoir of water.

2. Where Christians assemble to worship is incidental -- under branches of trees, rented hall, private home, or building owned by the church -- John 4: 23 - 24

3. Whether a congregation has elders or not is material, for unless in due time elders are developed and appointed, God's order has not been respected and followed -- Acts 14:23

#### V. TWO KINDS OF AUTHORITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT -- GENERAL AND SPECIFIC

1. GENERAL AUTHORITY is defined --"pertaining to, affecting, or applicable to, each and all of a class, kind or order; as general law ; negatively - "not limited to a precise import or application; not specific."

2. The word "Specific" is defined: "Precisely formulated or restricted; specifying; explicit; as a specific statement".

3. From these definitions, you can see the general includes each and all of the class, kind or order under consideration, though not precisely stated nor revealed.

4. The specific EXCLUDES everything, save that which is precisely stated or revealed.

5. When CHOICE is divinely authorized, it is general.

(1) In the realm of the general it is sufficient only to authorize the class.

(2) EXAMPLE: "Go" -- Matt. 28:19

1. God did not specify how to go, He gave us the choice.

2. Therefore we can go by:

(1) Walking

(2) Riding

(3) Flying

#### (4) Sailing

3. All of these are authorized because they are ways of "going".

6. Where CHOICE is expediencies are, and where EXPEDIENCIES are general authority is.

7. An EXPEDIENT is a means or method used in the accomplishment of God's will for us.

(1) EXAMPLE: Noah's tools in building the Ark -- Gen. 6:14 -- "make"

(2) Noah was allowed to use tools even though they are not mentioned.

8. Scriptural guidelines under which a thing may be claimed as an EXPEDIENT:

(1) In order for a thing to be expedient, it must first be lawful -- I Cor. 6:12; I Cor. 10:23

1. If a thing does not come within the scope of that which is authorized by general law, it is not an expedient.

2. In order for a thing to be expedient it cannot be SPECIFIED

(1) When God specifies, there is no choice.

(2) Expediency involves the right of a choice of the exercise of human judgment in the realm of those things included in that which God has authorized but not specified.

(3) In order for a thing to be expedient it must EDIFY -- I Cor. 14:26; 10:23

(4) In order for a thing to be expedient it must not offend the conscience of a brother -- I Cor. 10:32

1. I Cor. 8: 7 - 13

(5) In order for a thing to be expedient it must not be an addition to that which God has specified.

1. Sing (Eph. 5:19) -- specified -- playing an instrument is an addition.

9. There is no choice in the realm of the SPECIFIC.

(1) The specific excludes everything but that which is specified.

1. Sing -- Eph. 5:19 -- excludes every other "kind" of music.

2. The Lord's Supper -- Acts 10:7; I Cor. 11:23

(1) Unleavened bread and fruit of the vine excludes every other element -- Matt. 26:29

(2) "First day" excludes other days.

3. The congregation -- Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1

(1) This excludes every other congregation.

4. Elders in every church -- Acts 14:23; 20:28; I Pet. 5:2

(1) God specified their jurisdiction -- I Pet. 5:2

#### VI. THE SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES MUST BE RESPECTED.

1. The Hebrew writer shows the silence of the Scriptures must be respected in Heb. 7:14

(1) He said, "*Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood*" from the tribe of Judah.

(2) His argument is, since He spoke nothing it is prohibited.

(3) When the Lord does not authorize a thing it is EXCLUDED.

2. Let us look at passages of scripture that teach we must not go beyond what is written:

- (1) I Cor. 4:6
- (2) II John 9
- (3) Rev. 22: 18 - 19
- (4) Matt. 7: 21- 23
- (5) Gal. 1: 6 - 9
- (6) I Pet. 4:11
- (7) Psa. 19:13
- (8) II Cor. 5:7; Rom. 10:17
- (9) Deut. 29:29

(10) The silence of God is as binding as His word.

3. To go beyond what God has authorized is presumptuous sin -- Psa. 19:13

- (1) Nadab and Abihu offered fire which the Lord "*Commanded them not*" --Lev. 10:2
- (2) God had specified the fire to be used -- "*coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord*" --Lev. 16:12
- (3) They presumed upon the silence of the scripture.
- (4) Jesus said those religious people of Matthew 7: 21 were "*workers of iniquity*" -- Matt. 7: 21 - 23
  1. They were without the law of God.

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