

HOW TO ESTABLISH AUTHORITY

Once we understand that all authority resides in Christ, and all we do must first be authorized by the Lord, then, we are ready to pursue the important question of “how” to connect the authoritative will of the Lord in Heaven to our specific beliefs and practices here on earth. We are at a critical point in our walk with the Lord. We no longer focus merely on our free will to believe, but seek to establish God’s authority for what we are to believe. Unlike many who act first, no doubt intending to do it unto the Lord, we understand we must first have the Lord’s approval before we proceed to act (Colossians 3:17). It is not a matter of merely doing something and saying, “I am doing this in the name of the Lord”, but it is doing that which has “the name of the Lord” or his authoritative approval behind it (cf. Acts 4:7, 19:13-16). We know whatever the Lord approves of, it will be found where He has revealed His mind concerning the matter: His word (I Corinthians 2:10-13). How then do we use God’s word in a way pleasing unto Him in order to establish His authority in all that we believe, say and do?

When we examine Jesus’ use of Scripture, we see him using direct statements and explicit commands, necessary inference and approved examples to connect the authoritative Scriptures with certain beliefs and practices. Appealing to a simple direct statement or an explicit command for establishing the Lord’s authority is as straightforward as hearing one in authority state his will or order his command. After hearing or reading the direct statement or explicit command, one should know if something has been authorized or not. Necessary inference deals with inferring from what God implies. This avenue in establishing authority is not as direct as an explicit

command, for man must infer from what is implied. Yet, when the truth implied can only be necessarily inferred, the authority behind this truth is as strongly established as the authority behind any explicit command. By appealing to examples manifesting conduct approved of God, one can establish his own like conduct as being authorized from Heaven.

Jesus used **DIRECT STATEMENTS** from Scripture to establish proper belief (Matthew 11:9-10). To establish the fact that John was more than a prophet, Jesus pointed to “what is written” in Malachi 3:1 to show that John fulfilled the role established through prophesy of God’s messenger being sent before the Lord to prepare the way. Direct statements in the form of **EXPLICIT COMMANDS** were also avenues Jesus used to establish heaven’s approval for certain actions. To the man healed of leprosy, Jesus said, “...show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them” (Matthew 8:4). Jesus is appealing to an **EXPLICIT COMMAND** from Scripture (Leviticus 14:1-20) in order to establish authority from Heaven for what the healed man should do.

Secondly, Jesus led men to draw a necessary conclusion from what is implied in Scripture in order to establish authority for believing in the resurrection from the dead (Matthew 22:31-33). Jesus first points the resurrection skeptics to the scripture where Moses writes of God saying that He was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exodus 3:15). These noteworthy fathers had been dead for hundreds of years when Moses heard

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these words from God. From this scripture, Jesus adds the irrefutable premise that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Knowing that God is not the God of those defeated by death, man must necessarily conclude that these notables will rise again from the dead and live. In this instance, Jesus did not rely upon a direct statement from Scripture to establish the resurrection from the dead, but He appealed to man's ability to INFER from what is IMPLIED in Scripture. The resurrection was proven because Jesus said Moses showed that the dead are raised (Luke 20:37). How? Moses showed it, Jesus proved it and man knows it by reasoning from what is implied in the Scriptural evidence unto a necessary conclusion of fact. The resurrection is a fact backed by the authority of the Lord and worthy of belief in the heart of man through the process of NECESSARY INFERENECE.

A third way Jesus used the Scriptures to establish authority for certain actions was through APPROVED EXAMPLES . Jesus used an APPROVED EXAMPLE from Scripture to prove that His disciples were not sinning by doing some activity on the Sabbath, like plucking ears of corn to eat. Jesus said, "Or have ye not read in the law, that on the sabbath day the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are guiltless?" (Matthew 12:5). Under the Law of Moses, the priests would offer sacrifices every morning and evening, which were included with the offerings on the Sabbath day (Numbers 28:1-10). If all manual labor were forbidden on the sabbath, then by all appearances the priests were "profaning the sabbath", but according to God, they were "guiltless". Jesus uses an approved example here to show that some activity on the

sabbath, like the priests offering up sacrifices or the disciples reaching for an ear of corn to eat, did not violate God's law regarding the Sabbath. His disciples, like the priests, were "guiltless" (Matthew 12:7).

Those crying out for a new hermeneutic today, or a new approach to applying the Scriptures to our lives have referred to establishing authority through direct statements and explicit commands, necessary inference and approved examples as "Pattern Theology". They consider those who follow this pattern of establishing authority as being "blinded by the nineteenth century scientific method" in their approach to the Bible. Dear reader, was the first-century Christ blinded by any nineteenth century mindset? Are you so bold to stand up before our Lord and accuse him of practicing "Pattern Theology"? You must be prepared to do so because He established authority from Scriptures through the avenues of direct statements and explicit commands, necessary inference, and approved examples.

Examining "how" Jesus used the Old Testament Scriptures under which He lived to establish God's authority for certain beliefs, and practices, we can similarly use the New Testament Scriptures under which we live to confidently establish God's authority for our beliefs and practices. Let us employ the three avenues of establishing scriptural authority for partaking of the Lord's supper. Because Jesus **EXPLICITLY** **COMMANDED** his disciples to "do this in remembrance of me," we have clear authority

to partake of the Lord's supper today by eating the bread and drinking the fruit of the vine, and remembering respectively the Lord's body offered on the cross and His blood shed for the remission of our sins (I Corinthians 11:23-26). We have an APPROVED EXAMPLE to answer the question as to *what day* Christians should partake of the Lord's supper: "And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them..." (Acts 20:7). Paul and other disciples gathered with God's apparent approval on Sunday, the first day of the week, to partake of the Lord's supper with the disciples of the Lord. By following this approved example, we know that the like practice today has God's authoritative approval behind it. Since God approved of partaking the Lord's supper on the first day of the week, instead of the first day of the month, or year, and every week has a first day, it is NECESSARILY INFERED that we have authority for partaking of the Lord's supper *every first day of the week*.

Through these Christ tested avenues of establishing authority, we know we have heaven's approval to assemble together every first day of the week to partake of the Lord's supper. Where is the authority from heaven for the practice of partaking of the Lord's supper apart from the regular gathering of Christians; or the practice of only gathering to partake of the Lord's supper bi-monthly or bi-yearly; or the practice of partaking of the Lord's supper on any day other than the first day of the week?

We can have unity when we establish authority for our practice, united by participating in that which God has clearly approved. Disunity arises when authority for a practice is not clearly established, or purposely ignored. By establishing beliefs and practices through explicit command, approved example and necessary inference, we can clearly show that God approves of our practices and therefore promote unity.

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