

# Establishing Bible Authority

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## Introduction

Realizing that we will be judged by the Word of God (John 12:48-50), it is imperative that we respect the authority of Sacred Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Col. 3:17).

*John 12:48-50 ... 48 "He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. 49 "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. 50 "I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me." (NASB95)*

*2 Timothy 3:16-17 ... 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (NASB95)*

*Colossians 3:17 ... 17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. (NASB95)*

The Holy Spirit caused the inspired apostles and prophets to use three basic methods of authorizing religious actions: direct statements, divinely approved examples, and necessary inferences. The Lord calls upon us to use our minds in understanding the will of God (Col. 1:9-12; Eph. 5:15-17).

*Colossians 1:9-12 ... 9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. (NASB95)*

*Ephesians 5:15-17 ... 15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. 17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (NASB95)*

How does one understand the Bible? Exactly as one understands any other written message: by gathering information, serious contemplation, and drawing conclusions. Reasoning may be true and productive of good (2 Tim. 2:14-19, esp. vs. 15; Eph. 3:1-5) or faulty and productive of evil (Jer. 23:36; 2 Pet. 3:15-16). The outcome depends upon our attitude (John 7:17).

*2 Timothy 2:14-19 ... 14 Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers. 15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. 16 But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, 17 and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some. 19 Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness." (NASB95)*

*Ephesians 3:1-5 ... 1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— 2 if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; 3 that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. 4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; (NASB95)*

*Jeremiah 23:36 ... 36 "For you will no longer remember the oracle of the Lord, because every man's own word will become the oracle, and you have perverted the words of the living God, the Lord of hosts, our God. (NASB95)*

*2 Peter 3:15-16 ... 15 and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. (NASB95)*

*John 7:17 ... 17 "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself. (NASB95)*

## **Direct Statements**

It should go without saying that we are bound to obey any direct statement regarding our obligations to God. A direct statement might take the form of a positive commandment (Acts 2:38-40), a negative prohibition (Eph. 5:3-12), or a declarative statement of fact (Gal. 5:19-23).

*Acts 2:38-40 ... 38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." 40 And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" (NASB95)*

*Ephesians 5:3-12 ... 3 But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; 4 and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or*

*coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them; 8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light 9 (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), 10 trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; 12 for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. (NASB95)*

*Galatians 5:19-23 ... 19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (NASB95)*

Greek verbs communicate authoritative statements in various forms. The indicative mood is descriptive of something that is, as opposed to something that might be. The subjunctive mood expresses a possibility, probability, exhortation, or axiomatic concept. The imperative mood is used when making a command, or when the speaker/author is encouraging or asking someone to do something. All are employed to express direct commands.

## **Approved Examples**

The Scriptures also teach by example or illustration (1 Cor. 10:6, 11). Parents know the importance of setting the right example (Eph. 6:4; Prov. 31:28-29). Christ conducted Himself so that when men saw His actions they could know how they ought to live (Matt. 16:24; 1 Pet. 2:21). So likewise, the Apostles acted under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and their example guided the early church (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 4:9).

*1 Corinthians 10:6 ... 6 Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. (NASB95)*

*1 Corinthians 10:11 ... 11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. (NASB95)*

*Ephesians 6:4 ... 4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (NASB95)*

*Proverbs 31:28-29 ... 28 Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband also, and he praises her, saying: 29 "Many daughters have done nobly, But you excel them all." (NASB95)*

*Matthew 16:24 ... 24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. (NASB95)*

*1 Peter 2:21 ... 21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, (NASB95)*

*1 Corinthians 11:1 ... 1 Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ. (NASB95)*

*Philippians 3:17 ... 17 Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. (NASB95)*

*Philippians 4:9 ... 9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. (NASB95)*

The New Testament records instances of divinely approved actions that illustrate God's commands. These approved examples are no less important than direct statements. In this manner the Holy Spirit illustrates those aspects of obedience, which are required, but may not be expressed in the form of a command. The story of Philip and the eunuch illustrates the New Testament teaching on baptism (Acts 8:38-39; Rom. 6:3-4). The example of the early church demonstrates the need for a plurality of elders in each local congregation (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Phil. 1:1).

*Acts 8:38-39 ... 38 And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing. (NASB95)*

*Romans 6:3-4 ... 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (NASB95)*

*Acts 14:23 ... 23 When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. (NASB95)*

*Acts 20:17 ... 17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. (NASB95)*

*Acts 20:28 ... 28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. (NASB95)*

*Philippians 1:1 ... 1 Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: (NASB95)*

## Necessary Inferences

We do not know who first used the expression “necessary inference” but its equivalent can be found in the works of Aristotle and other Greek writers. Necessary inference is simply a part of the reasoning process. When evidence is collected and a conclusion is drawn, that conclusion is our inference. It is “necessary” to the extent that the evidence demands it.

The Bible teaches through necessary inference, i.e., conclusions that must be true even though they are not explicitly stated. For example, a noteworthy Messianic prophecy affirms, “The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Ps. 110:4). This verse necessarily infers three irrefutable facts: (1) There would be a change in the priesthood; (2) There would be a change in the law, for a change in the priesthood necessitated a change also in the law; and (3) perfection could not be attained through the Levitical priesthood, thus it was necessary that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 7:11-17).

*Psalm 110:4 ... 4 The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, “You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.” (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 7:11-17 ... 11 Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron? 12 For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also. 13 For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. 14 For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests. 15 And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, 16 who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. 17 For it is attested of Him, “You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.” (NASB95)*

Jesus taught through parables or illustrative stories, and then called upon men to infer the necessary spiritual lesson and apply it to their lives: “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” In like manner, the Apocalypse repeatedly says, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Sometimes we are expected to necessarily conclude points of truth from other instruction given. Necessary inference is that which must be true even though it is not explicitly stated. It is something clearly implied by that which is said. For example, Jesus condemned the Sadducees for not concluding that there is a resurrection from God’s statement to Moses in Exodus chapter three (Matt. 22:23-33). Again He used this method in reassuring John the Baptist that He was indeed the Christ (Matt. 11:2-6). This concept appears elsewhere in the New Testament (Eph. 4:9-10; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

*Matthew 22:23-33 ... 23 On that day some Sadducees (who say there is no resurrection) came to Jesus and questioned Him, 24 asking, “Teacher, Moses said, ‘If a man dies having no children, his brother as next of kin shall marry his wife, and raise up children*

for his brother.’ 25 “Now there were seven brothers with us; and the first married and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother; 26 so also the second, and the third, down to the seventh. 27 “Last of all, the woman died. 28 “In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had married her.” 29 But Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God. 30 “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. 31 “But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: 32 ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.” 33 When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at His teaching. (NASB95)

Matthew 11:2-6 ... 2 Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples 3 and said to Him, “Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?” 4 Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you hear and see: 5 the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. 6 “And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.” (NASB95)

Ephesians 4:9-10 ... 9 (Now this expression, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) (NASB95)

Revelation 2:7 ... 7 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.’ (NASB95)

Revelation 2:11 ... 11 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.’ (NASB95)

Revelation 2:17 ... 17 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.’ (NASB95)

Revelation 2:29 ... 29 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ (NASB95)

Revelation 3:6 ... 6 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ (NASB95)

Revelation 3:13 ... 13 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ (NASB95)

Revelation 3:22 ... 22 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ ” (NASB95)

Is a “necessary inference” binding upon the conscience? Yes! When careful study of God’s word impresses you with an inescapable conclusion, however conveyed, you must accept it or be untrue to yourself and to God.

## **Conclusion**

The confusion and division so characteristic of the religious world would not exist if men would only learn to respect the authority of Christ. Unity would be attainable if we would “speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11) and preach those “things which are fitting for sound doctrine” (Tit. 2:1).

*1 Peter 4:11 ... 11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (NASB95)*

*Titus 2:1 ... 1 But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. (NASB95)*