



BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF AUTHORITY

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Our Need For Authority

We live in a time where men will call on the name of the Lord and glorify Him with their lips while still having idols in their hearts (Ezek. 14:1-3). As a result, division, divisiveness and contention plague the religious world. Where is all of this coming from? Why the division? Because men who do not love the truth claim to serve God but have no desire to know or do the will of God (2 Thess. 2:9-12). With their lips they praise Him, but their hearts do not seek Him. In short, we live in a time where men want to put the name of Jesus on everything that they do, but are unwilling to seek authority for anything that they do. We live in a world where man's religion is motivated by the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes and the pride of life, instead of a love for God.

However, if we want to be pleasing to God, if we want to prove ourselves separate from the world and therefore free from the condemnation that is in the world, then we must follow in the steps of Jesus Christ who lived on this earth by the simple rule, "*I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent Me*" (John 6:38). In this lesson we are going to discuss our need for finding Bible authority for all that we do. Let us keep in mind throughout this study the fact that if Jesus, as the Son of God, did only that for which He had been given authority by the Father, how much greater need we have to seek that same authority!

Our Souls Depend On It

Those who claim to do God's will but do not seek His authority are working very hard to convince us that we do not need God's express permission for everything we do. Many have said, "God just wants us to worship Him, He doesn't care how we do it." But, what would Cain have said to these people if they had told him God is happy with any worship (Gen. 4:3-7)? What would Nadab and Abihu have said if we told them God does not care how we worship Him, seeing that they were struck dead for offering "*strange fire which the Lord had not commanded*" (Lev. 10:1-3). What would Jesus have said if we told Him that the Father does not really care how we worship Him? The Bible tells us exactly what He would have said, because He already said it in Matt. 15:9: "*In vain they worship Me teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*"

In John 4:23-24 Jesus tells us that it does matter how we worship God, "*for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in **spirit** and in **truth***" (emph. mine, DP). Jesus also tells us what He will say on the judgment day to those who will not respect God's authority, "*I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!*" (Matt. 7:23). Why do we need authority for what we do? Because our souls depend on it! No matter how sincerely men preach that God is pleased with us as long as we believe, God give us a very different picture! "*Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*" (Col. 3:17).

Deliverance from Self-conceit

In this day and age men have become so conceited that we actually believe we are more enlightened than any generation before us. So much so that it is claimed that even the Bible is "outdated" by our progress. Sadly, men today believe that our level of human reasoning has surpassed even that of God. When pointed to a Scripture that condemns homosexuality during a discussion on the issue, one woman plainly said, "God is just wrong." But we must not fail to see that it is this sort of arrogance that Bible authority is able to deliver us from. "*Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for 'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.'* Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Pet. 5:5-7).

We think that we have gone a notch above God, but God tells us, "*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death*" (Prov. 14:12). We think we have outwitted God, but He assures us, "*For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, 'He catches the wise in their own craftiness'; and again, 'The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile'*" (1 Cor. 3:19-20). We think that we have more wisdom, more enlightenment and more righteousness than God even though He assures us saying, "*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' says the LORD. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts'*" (Isa. 55:8-9).

Why do we need Bible authority? To save us from our own conceit and arrogance. That is why we are told, "*Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us **not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other***" (1 Cor. 4:6). How do we avoid exalting ourselves above the wisdom of God? By submitting wholeheartedly to His word. By not allowing our minds to wonder beyond the realm of divine revelation when it comes to spiritual and religious matters. By seeking Bible authority for all that we do. We have been warned, lest we begin to think that we have achieved a higher level of understanding than that revealed in the Bible, "*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, **casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled***" (2 Cor. 10:4-6). This punishment will be upon us if we exalt ourselves against the knowledge of God. God created us. He will also judge us.

Unity Requires It

One of the great benefits of establishing Bible authority is that it helps keep the unity in the church which Jesus so earnestly prayed for in John 17:20-23. Unity is something that we all can appreciate. Indeed, most people in the religious world seek unity. Their efforts in this, however, often conflict with their lack of obedience to God's will. As a result we see doctrines such as "unity in diversity" and "agreeing to disagree" spreading like wild fire.

By appealing to these doctrines men are not trying to find the unity that Jesus prayed for, but a way to do what they want without being condemned by anyone else. Paul tells us, however, that the only way to have true unity in the church is by "*speaking the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*" (1 Cor. 1:10). The only way any group of people is able to "speak the same thing" and "have the same mind" is if they all appeal to one standard. In this case, the Bible. "*If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commands of the Lord*" (1 Cor. 14:37).

Nevertheless, there are some who blame the Bible for the religious division found in the world, saying, "The Bible is too complicated, we cannot all understand it alike." God, on the other hand, promises that when we read the Scriptures we can understand (Eph. 3:4). Along with this promise, we are also *commanded* to understand (Eph. 5:8, 10, 17). If we are willing to apply diligence to truly knowing and understanding the Scriptures (2 Tim. 2:15), then we can come to the unity of the faith. But we must first put on humility and the fear of the Lord (Prov. 9:10; James 4:7-10). "*Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls*" (James 1:21).

Necessary for Pleasing God

If it has not already been made clear in each of the previous points, let it be made clear here, that in order to be pleasing to God we must have authority for all that we do. If we love God, then we will obey His commandments (John 14:15). If we want to know God then we will obey His commandments (1 John 2:3-6). If we want to have Jesus with us "*even unto the end of the age*" (Matt. 28:20), then we must learn to "*observe all that (He) commanded.*" Finally, if we want to have fellowship with God and to have God

in all that we do, we must avoid going outside of His doctrine. For it is written, "*Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him*" (2 John 9-10). If we want to abide in the Father we must have authority from the Scriptures for all that we do; for our worship, for the work that the church does, for our personal attitude, for our good works. If anything we do is not authorized by God's word then it does not please God.

Conclusion

"Failure to recognize the need for authority in religion shows that we have failed to learn a basic Bible principle governing acceptability with God. We may act without authority from God, but we cannot do so and have God's approval and fellowship (2 John 9-11)" (Moore, *A Study of Authority*, pg. 6). If we want to be God's children we must strive to please Him and to make ourselves right with Him. In order to do this, we must learn to fear God (have a healthy respect for Him) enough to submit to His will. Let us not be led astray by the philosophies of this world which say we should be able to do whatever we want. That is the same attitude that led Israel into captivity (Isa. 1:19-20). Authority is not a bad thing. The entire universe retains its organization because it follows a set of unchangeable laws. The same God that organized the universe gave us the Bible. We can have salvation for our souls if we are willing to appeal to that standard.

The Two Testaments

A quick glance through the Bible will reveal that it has been divided into two major sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. Many have asked why there are two testaments, and many answers have been given. Some people claim that there are two different gods and that the god of the Old Testament was a violent and warring god while the god of the New Testament is a merciful and loving god. There are also some who make no distinction at all between the two testaments and appeal to both equally for their religious authority.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, a young evangelist, exhorting him to "*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*" (2 Tim. 2:15). The term, "rightly dividing" means to "cut straight...handle aright...rightly deal with a thing" (Vine's). In other words, there is a right way and a wrong way to deal with or handle the Scriptures. This is especially true when it comes to disguising between the Old and the New Testaments. If we are going to rightly divide the word of truth and thus have a proper respect for God's authority, it is essential that we come to understand the true difference between the two testaments and to know how to properly apply each to our lives. There is no room here for speculation (such as saying that there are two gods of the Bible).

The fact is that there is only one God of the Bible and the same God inspired both the Old (O.T.) and the New Testament (N.T.) alike. In Heb. 1:1-2 it says, "*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in times past to the fathers through the prophets...*" (this refers to the O.T. Scriptures), "*...has in these last days spoken to us by His Son...*" (this refers to the N.T. Scriptures). In other words, it is the same God who speaks to mankind in both of the Testaments. Each of the two testaments had distinct purposes in God's plan for man's salvation, but both were a part of the same plan. The Old was to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:24) while the New is for living in Christ (Gal. 3:25). There are many, however, who do not understand this relationship. Therefore, it is our purpose here to develop a proper understanding.

The Old Testament or the "First Covenant"

While in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying God's command (Gen. 3:1-7). Their sin set in motion many terrible consequences that would be felt by every generation since. "*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned*" (Rom. 5:12). Physically, because of sin, mankind was separated from the tree of life and thus condemned to die (Gen. 3:22-24; Rom. 3:23). Spiritually, man's sin made him unholy. As a result, man also experienced spiritual death because his sins separated him from God, the only true source of life (Isa. 59:2).

In spite of this dire situation, God showed His great love by promising that He would redeem mankind through the One whom He would send. The first glimpse of this hope is found in Gen. 3:15, "*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.*" Even though Satan succeeded in causing sin to enter the world, God promised that one day the Seed of woman would deal Satan a death blow and be victorious over him. This promise of redemption is the theme for the entire Bible. Everything God does in the Bible from this point on is directed toward the salvation of mankind.

Many generations after Adam and Even sinned, God focuses the Bible story on one family specifically-the family of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-7). Because of Abraham's faithfulness, God promised that the One who would "*bless all the families of the earth*" (Gen. 12:3) would come from the nation that would consist of Abraham's descendants. The rest of the Old Testament records God's dealings with Abraham's family as it

grows into a nation and becomes a kingdom on the earth. That nation became known as the nation of Israel and eventually the Jews.

In the book of Exodus, after Abraham's descendants had multiplied greatly (Ex. 1:7), God made a covenant with them. This covenant would distinguish Israel from all the other nations of the world and make them God's "*special people*" (Ex. 19:5). Because Israel was a nation, God's covenant with them included civil laws as well as religious and ceremonial laws. This was known as the Law of Moses. Today that law is also known as the Old Law, the Old Covenant, or the Old Testament.

In Deut. 5, Moses tells us exactly with whom God made that first covenant. "*The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb (Mt. Sinai). The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive*" (Deut. 5:2-3). The Law of Moses was not for every nation, but for Israel alone.

There is something about God's covenant with Israel that every Bible student must understand. The promise given to Abraham which said that in his Seed, "*All the families of the earth will be blessed,*" was meant to affect the entire world; that is, "*all families.*" But the Law of Moses makes it very clear that it was not for all the world, nor was the old covenant meant to bless "*all the families of the earth.*" The Law of Moses was exclusively for the family of Abraham-the Israelites-and not for the whole world. Ps. 147:19-20 states this very fact: "*He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any nation; and as for His judgments, they have not known them.*"

Since the Law of Moses was not for the whole world, we must conclude that it did not provide the redemption for mankind that God promised in Gen. 3:15. This meant that God's promise to Abraham was still waiting to be fulfilled. When that first covenant with Israel was established, God had yet to bless all nations. The truth is, and let all understand, that God did not intend for that first covenant to provide a means for salvation! How can we know this? Because, while that first covenant was still in effect, God showed Israel that He was going to make a new and better covenant when the time was right.

In Jer. 31:31-34, Jeremiah prophesied of a new covenant saying, "*Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah -- not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.*"

Jeremiah makes several very important points: 1. The new covenant would NOT be like the first covenant. 2. Everyone in that new covenant would have God's law in their hearts. 3. Everyone in that new covenant would know God (many of the Israelites were in the first covenant even though they did not obey God). 4. God would forgive their iniquities-this is what we have been waiting for since Gen. 3:15! This promise of forgiveness was never included in that first covenant. Whenever God intended to make the new covenant, He would fulfill His promise to redeem mankind. At that time He would also fulfill His promise to Abraham to bless all the families of the earth.

In the book of Hebrews, God teaches us something very important about these two covenants that we must understand if we are to "*rightly divide the Scriptures.*" Concerning Jer. 31:31-34, the Hebrew writer states, "*In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away*" (Heb. 8:13). In other words, when God promised to make a new covenant, that meant that we was also going to take the first covenant away (much like trading in an old car for a new car). This meant that whenever the new covenant was going to be established, the Law of Moses and everything that was connected with it would no longer be used by God's people.

The New Testament or the "New Covenant"

Throughout the Old Testament, God gave prophecies (such as Jer. 31:31-34) that provided clues as to when the new covenant was going to be established. Those prophecies included information about the Christ or Messiah: the descendant of Abraham who would "*bless all the families of the earth.*" It was prophesied that He would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:6), and that He would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23). The Christ would be the One who would deliver the people from sin and establish the New Covenant. One well-known prophecy which indicates this is Isa. 53, as it says in verse 5, "*But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray.*" Throughout the Old Testament God's people were waiting for these prophecies to be fulfilled; they were waiting for the coming of the Messiah.

About fourteen-hundred years after God established the first covenant, the prophecies that God had made about the Christ began to be fulfilled. An angel appeared to a virgin named Mary and also to a man named Joseph, to whom she was betrothed. He told them that Mary was going to give birth to a son and that His name was going to be Jesus (Luke 1:26-38; Matt. 1:18-23). Soon after, Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem. The New Testament begins with stories surrounding His birth as well as the birth of John the Baptist. John prepared the people for the Messiah through his preaching. Jesus, the Messiah, then began to preach the gospel, saying, "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel*" (Mark 1:15).

For about three years Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom of God. He taught people about the kingdom, He taught them how to enter the kingdom, and He taught them how to live as citizens in the kingdom of God. He also performed many miracles, signs, and wonders, proving that He was indeed sent from God. During His three-year ministry, Jesus fulfilled literally thousands of prophecies contained in the Old Testament. There is no doubt that He was the One God had been promising since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden.

Toward the end of Jesus' ministry, the Jewish leaders arrested Him because they did not believe in who He was and because they were jealous of His popularity (Mark 15:10). They convinced the Roman government to put Him to death by crucifying Him on a cross. But, Jesus was fully aware that this was going to take place. Several months prior to His crucifixion, Jesus told His disciples on several occasions that He was going to be handed over to the Romans and that He was going to be crucified. However, He also told them that on the third day after His death, He was going to rise from the dead (John 2:19; 3:14; 12:32-33).

The evening before Jesus was arrested He had one final supper with twelve of His disciples, which also became the twelve apostles. During that last supper Jesus told the apostles that He was going to be betrayed that very night (Luke 22:22). It was during that supper that He also instituted what we know today as the Lord's Supper. In giving the Lord's Supper Jesus said concerning the fruit of the vine (grape juice), "*This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you*" (Luke 22:20). Notice that He said, "*new covenant in My blood.*"

Jesus said this because when He died on the cross, by His death and the shedding of His blood, He established the new covenant that God had been promising throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus' death on the cross accomplished the very thing that God had promised in Gen. 3:15. Though Satan succeeded in bringing sin into the world, Jesus succeeded in overcoming the condemnation of sin through His death. Therefore, it says in 1 John 3:8, "*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.*" That is exactly what Jesus did on the cross. Through His death Jesus not only established the New Covenant, He also fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy, which says, "*I will remember their sins no more.*"

And Jesus did not remain dead. Just as He told His disciples, He rose from the dead on the third day, proving beyond all doubt that He is indeed the Son of God and that Salvation had in fact been brought down to mankind. Forty days after His resurrection Jesus ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:2). Just prior to His ascension, Jesus commissioned His disciples to take the gospel (good news) of salvation to the entire world. The New Testament Scriptures, from Acts through Revelation, is the record of their work. The book of Acts is the history of the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to the rest of the world. All of the other books of the New Testament are letters written to churches and to Christians instructing them as to how they ought to conduct themselves in the new covenant in Christ.

Even though this New Covenant was different from the old covenant, because it is a covenant there are some similarities that we need to keep in mind. 1. Every covenant is based on specific promises (Heb. 8:6). God made a promise to forgive the sins of men and to give them eternal life in the new covenant. Those who believe in Jesus and enter into that covenant by obeying the gospel also promise to live faithful before God for the rest of their lives. 2. In order to fulfill those promises, A covenant must contain laws: a description of the requirements of that covenant. This is what is contained in the New Testament Scriptures. They contain the law of the new covenant in Christ. *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ has made us free from the law of sin and death"* (Rom. 8:1-2). Those who desire salvation must live their lives according to the New Testament. That is their obligation if they enter into a covenant relationship with God.

The Two Testaments and Bible Authority

Jesus established the New Testament. For those under that covenant, the New Testament Scriptures are law. But, what are we supposed to do with the Old Testament? Are we supposed to obey the laws recorded in it? Are we supposed to throw it away and not even bother with it? Or are we supposed learn something from it?

Because the New Testament is God's law for today, we cannot use the law of Moses as our source of authority. Jesus said, *"No servant can serve two masters"* (Luke 16:13). This applies to our relationship in the new covenant. Paul talks about this in Rom. 7:1-4. *"Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another -- to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God."*

Notice: 1. If we are alive in Christ, we are *"dead to the law"* of Moses. 2. We have been married to Christ. This is illustrative of our commitment to Him. If we are committed to Christ and His law, it is impossible for us to also seek the law of Moses without committing adultery (so to speak) against Christ.

Paul discusses this same thing in Gal. 5:4, saying, *"You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace."* A covenant is an agreement. The old covenant had its own set of agreements. The new covenant also has its own set of agreements. For one to try to keep the agreement of the first covenant, he/she would have to neglect the agreements under the new covenant, thus preventing him/her from having salvation in Christ. Those who seek to justify themselves by appealing to the authority of old law are bound to keep the whole law, animal sacrifices and all. For it says in Gal. 5:3, that *"every man who becomes circumcised (or keeps any part of the law)...is a debtor to keep the whole law."* Remember that we said before that God did not provide salvation under the law of Moses. Therefore, those who seek to be justified by that law give up the salvation that is in Christ. They *"have become estranged from Christ,"* and *"have fallen from grace."*

Therefore, in terms of Bible authority, if we want salvation in Christ then we cannot go to the old testament to justify our actions. Our worship must only consist of that which is revealed in the New Testament. The organization and work of the church must be according to the pattern revealed in the New Testament. The good works that Christians do must be according to the good works God revealed in the New Testament.

Does this mean that the Old Testament is absolutely useless? Not at all! For the Old Testament is just as much the word of God as the New, it simply fulfills a different purpose. To help us learn its purpose, Paul wrote, "*Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted...Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come*" (1 Cor. 10:6, 11). The new covenant, God's law for today, and our salvation are all found within the pages of the New Testament. But in the Old Testament God shows us the kind of faithfulness required of those who are being saved. Though the Old Testament does not tell us what to do to be saved, it gives us "*wisdom for salvation,*" (2 Tim. 3:15). That is, it teaches us the kind attitude we must have in serving God. It teaches us of our need to flee from every form of evil. It teaches us to follow God's law as closely as possible and to walk before God in fear. It also teaches that God fulfills every promise that He makes. Just as God fulfilled His promise to Abraham in Christ Jesus, we know that He is going to fulfill His promise of eternal salvation to those who obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. "*And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him*" (Heb. 5:9).

Therefore, let us gain wisdom for salvation from the Old Testament, but for our authority in religion, let us appeal to the New Testament alone.

God's Sovereignty

By Mark Dunagan

Sovereignty

*"The conclusion, when all has been heard is: fear God and keep His commands,
because this applies to every person"
(Ecclesiastes 12:13).*

The term "sovereign" means, "above or superior to all others; chief, greatest; supreme". God is presented in Scripture as being above everyone and everything else, as being the supreme ruler and the One who has the say in what is right and what is wrong (*Genesis 14:19 "the most high God"; Deuteronomy 10:17; 32:39; Joshua 2:11; 1 Chronicles 29:11; 2 Chron. 20:6; Nehemiah 9:6; Job 33:13; 36:23; 41:11; Psalm 24:1; Daniel 2:21; Acts 17:24-26; Romans 14:11; Ephesians 4:6; James 4:12 "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy"*).

"What Gives God The Right?"

Many issues of "authority" boil down to, "What right does God have to tell me what to do?" In response, let me offer these considerations:

God created you, as well as everyone else. In addition, you didn't receive all of your "being" from your parents, for God forms the spirit of each and every person (*Genesis 1:26; Ecclesiastes 12:7 "then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it"; Zechariah 12:1*). Each of us owes our entire existence to God, and that naturally brings with it the moral obligation to serve Him.

God is completely holy, pure and just (*1 John 1:5*). He has the moral and ethical right to tell us what to do, seeing that He is always right (*Romans 3:4; Psalm 119:128 "Therefore I esteem right all Thy precepts concerning everything"*).

God is completely pure and hence He has no ulterior motive (like selfishness, a big ego, or so on) for commanding us to serve Him and following His laws. All His commands, even negative commands, are in our best spiritual and eternal interest (*Deuteronomy 5:33 "that it may be well with you"; 6:24 "for our good always and for our survival"; 1 Peter 3:10-11*). Behind every command of God is eternal wisdom and tremendous love for the human race.

We have proven over and over again our inability to discover truth and guide others or ourselves by our own wisdom (*Jeremiah 10:23; Romans 3:23; Romans 1:18-32*). Mankind has morally disqualified them from calling the shots.

After all our sins and selfishness, God then sent His own Son to die for our sins. Thus, God has proven over and over again that no one loves us like He does, that no one has our best interest at heart like He does, and that serving Him is not a lost of life, but rather, gaining true life (*Matthew 16:24-25*).

Added to this, in the Book of Job, when Job begins to question God's moral government of this universe, God challenges Job to answer some questions about how this physical world works and how it was created (*Job 38:1ff*). The point is that since man can't even figure out how all physical processes work (simple addition and subtraction in the mind of God), then man doesn't have any right to question God's commands and moral governing of the universe. If man can't even figure out the physical realm, then certainly he doesn't have the right to challenge God's wisdom in the spiritual realm.

"Authority"

*“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying,
‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth’”
(Matthew 28:18).*

The term "authority" means "the right and power to command, enforce laws, determine, influence, or judge". Jesus is telling us that He has the right to tell us how to live, what to do and not to do, how to worship God, what is right and wrong, and all other issues. A proper relationship with God must start with the acceptance that God is God and am I not, and that God has the right to tell me how to live in every area of my life. This is what it means to be in subjection to God or Christ (Ephesians 5:24; 1 Samuel 3:9 "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant is listening").

Authority and Faith: Faith is the acceptance that God has the moral right to tell us what to do, and that God always knows what He is talking about. David expressed it well, when he said, "Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar" (Romans 3:4).

"Let" implies that "let this always be our conclusion when any difference is found between human thinking and God's view." Let the ways of God always be seen as right and just, and let all human critics be viewed as liars. *"Paul quotes Psalm 51:4. David has just confessed the terribleness of his sin. A sin that was pleasant! Sin with a beautiful woman! His attitude was, that God would deal justly with him. Whatever decision God would make would be a righteous one. And when people examine his treatment and VIEW OF DAVID'S ACTIONS they would all see that God had indeed been equitable with David."**

After committing adultery with a beautiful, willing woman, David ADMITS THAT GOD IS RIGHT (in the right to call such wonderful passion-from the human point of view-SIN). Have we learned this lesson?

Therefore, at the heart of Bible Authority is the trust that God has all the right answers, even when those answers are unpopular in our surrounding culture, and even when everyone seems to disagree with God.

Modern Applications: Our modern culture says homosexuality is genetic or natural, God says otherwise (*Romans 1:27*). Modern culture wants many reasons to divorce, God says otherwise (*Matthew 19:9*). Some want the days of Genesis to be millions of years in length, God says otherwise (*Genesis 1:14; Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 19:4; Romans 1:20*). Some religions say women should be pastors, God says otherwise (*1 Timothy 3:2*). Some say capital punishment is murder, God says otherwise (*Romans 13:4*).

Authority and Love: While some want to place love on a higher plane than obedience, Jesus linked these two qualities together (*John 14:15*). One writer noted, "The Bible teaches that the only way to yield to God's love is to yield to God's authority, and that therefore the love principle never rises higher than the authority principle"***

The same truth is found in *1 John 2:3-6; 5:3; 1 Corinthians 7:19 and 1 Timothy 6:13-14*. In *Luke 18:18-25*, we find the story of the man whom Jesus could not save. It was not because Jesus did not love him, for Mark states that He did (*Mark 10:21*). Nor is it because He lacked the power, for He had authority over all flesh (*John 17:2*). Jesus told him that there was one thing that he must do if he would be his faithful disciple. The young man rejected Jesus' expectations. Hence, to spurn Jesus' commands is to spurn His love for us. We must reject the philosophy that "love" and "thus says the Lord" are on some occasions incompatible. Paul pointed out that love "rejoices in the truth" (*1 Corinthians 13:4-6*); therefore, love and obedience to the will of God, are never in conflict. Or, we could say that love and obedience to the will of God, love and respect for God's authority is the same thing (*Malachi 1:6-8*).

When we talk about Bible Authority, remember, we are not talking about something that is cold and sterile or academic. Rather, we are talking about how true love for God is expressed and demonstrated.

This lesson was originally presented in a study on Bible Authority by Mark Dunagan of Beaverton, OR. This along with the other sixty-eight lessons that make up his study can be viewed in their original context at www.beavertonchurchofchrist.net.

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*McGuiggan p. 116

** The Spiritual Sword, October 1973, p. 43.

Christ The Sure Foundation

In Matt. 16:18 Jesus said, "...and on this rock I will build My church." The "rock" that Jesus was referring to was the confession that Peter made in verse 16 of this same passage, saying, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" This truth is one that is immovable and unchangeable. It states the authority of Jesus Christ as the Son of God-the very basis upon which the Lord is building His church. This is the founding principle by which all men are saved. In this lesson we are going to search the Scriptures in order to see just how important it is for us to acknowledge the authority of Christ and how important it is that we make His authority the ruling force in our lives.

The True Foundation

The supreme authority of Jesus Christ was perfected when He was raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of God. Thus, Peter proclaimed in Acts 2:32-36, "*This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God...Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.*" This is the essential truth that all of us must come to believe, acknowledge, and to base our lives upon if we desire salvation. As Jesus said, "...for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24). The Hebrew writer said of Jesus, "*And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him*" (Heb. 5:9).

Throughout the Scriptures the necessity of acknowledging and submitting to the authority of Christ is stressed. Even before His death Jesus showed that His words would be the standard by which we will be judged on the last day. "*He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him - the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.*" Thus, if we desire salvation we must receive and obey His words; we must respect His authority.

In the Great Commission Jesus emphasized His authority as being the governing factor in man's salvation. In Matt. 28:18-19, He said, "*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore...*" It is by His authority that His disciples preach the gospel and it is salvation by that authority that is preached. Only by believing in Him and submitting to Him in baptism are men able to become His disciples. As His disciples, Jesus said that all must be taught "*to observe all things that I have commanded you...*" (vs. 20). Why? Because He is Lord and Christ!

In studies of the conversions in Acts we often observe the pattern that is establish for what men must do to be saved. It is important that we do this, but equally important is our need to observe the gospel message that is preached in those conversions and the fact that the authority of Jesus Christ is always proclaimed.

In the climax of his gospel sermon in Acts chapter two, Peter proclaimed in vs. 36, "...*God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.*" In Acts 8:12 when Philip preached to the Samaritans it says that they "*believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ...*" In Acts 8:37 the Ethiopian eunuch confessed, based on Philip's preaching, that "*Jesus is the Christ Son of God.*" When Peter was sent to preach to the household of Cornelius, Peter's entire sermon emphasized the authority of Jesus Christ, as he spoke to them saying, "*But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ - He is Lord of all... And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead*" (Acts 10:34-43). This same messages is echoed throughout the book of Acts as men from every nation are taught to cast off their former ways and to submit to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Throughout the New Testament epistles the apostles and prophets continued to reiterate this eternal truth. The book of Revelation emphasized the fact that Jesus Christ has been glorified and that through Him there is victory over sin and death. In Revelation chapter five, a scene is described where elders and angels surround the throne of God. Then Jesus, the Lamb, enters the scene and all who are present proclaim praises to Him, saying, "*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!...Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever*" (Rev. 5:11-14).

The apostle Paul summarizes these things in Phil. 2:5-11 where he describes the humility of Jesus as He set aside the form of God in order to dwell in the form of a man and to die on the cross. He goes on to describe how God raised Jesus up from the dead and "*has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*"

Building on the True Foundation

Dear reader, we cannot emphasize these things enough, for our salvation depends on them. In our culture there is a strong influence pressuring men to reject all authority and to pursue one's personal desires at all times. Yet, if we are going to build our lives on the sure foundation of Jesus Christ, then we must shed the influence of the world and learn to embrace the authority of Christ in our lives.

If our lives are not founded upon the eternal principles of Christ's divine nature and authority then we will fall! This was the lesson that Jesus taught in the story of the wise and foolish builders in Matt. 7:24-27. "*But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. **And great was its fall.***"

The wise man, and also the faithful Christian, does more than acknowledge or talk about the foundation. He actively builds his life upon that foundation. "*Whoever **hears** these sayings of mine and **does** them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.*" "*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but **he who does** the will of My Father in heaven*" (Matt. 7:21). Is your life built upon that one true foundation?

While every Christian will acknowledge the need to have faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, few actually see the need to submit to His authority. But, as Paul said in Phil. 2, "*at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...*" We will learn to respect His authority eventually. We can learn now, when we have the opportunity to also be saved by His authority, or we can wait until the last day where, by His authority, we will be judged.

God Has Spoken

In order to truly know God, He must in some way or another communicate with us. There is a way to know about God by observing power and wisdom seen in the creation (Rom. 1:20). Though we can know about Him, in order to truly know who He is and what He is like, there must be communication. To fulfill this purpose, there are several books in existence that claim to contain revelation from God. Among these books perhaps the most well known is the Bible. The Bible claims that "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God*" (2 Tim. 3:16). If the Bible is indeed the word of God then it is every person's responsibility to learn what it has to say. But, it would be foolish for any man to accept something of this nature without first testing it or proving it as to whether or not it is what it claims to be. The Bible itself teaches, "*Test all things; hold fast what is good*" (1 Thess. 5:21). For this reason, we will examine some of the evidence that has been used to prove that the Bible is in fact the word of God. Let the reader understand that this list is not complete. This is merely a glimpse of the evidence which suggests that God has spoken.

Types of Evidences

When examining a literary document such as the Bible, there are two types of evidences that can must be examined: 1. **Internal Evidence:** This is evidence which can be seen within the Bible itself without using outside sources. This evidence consists of fulfilled prophecies, the unity of the Bible, the conciseness and honesty of the Bible, and so forth. 2. **External Evidence:** This is evidence taken from outside sources which confirm the truthfulness of what the Bible says and claims. This evidence consists of archeological evidences, geographical references, scientific principles and facts, and historical accuracy. We will examine just a few of both of these kinds of evidences to show that God has spoken, and that the Bible is His written word.

Internal Evidence

Fulfilled Prophecy: In Deuteronomy 18:21-22 Moses describes a principle that is most useful for testing the validity of a prophecy. "*And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?' -- when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.*" Simply put, if a prophecy does not come true then the one who gives it is not from God. If the Bible is not the word of God then this statement would be the downfall of its claim. If the Bible is the word of God then this statement provides the means for absolute surety that its claim is true, for there are hundreds of prophecies recorded in the pages of the Bible. Have these prophecies been fulfilled exactly as they were revealed?

In Ezekiel 1:2; 29:17, Ezekiel clearly predicted that God would make the city of Tyre "*a bare rock*" (26:5), "*a place for the spreading of nets*" (26:5), that the stones and timbers by which the city was built would be thrown into the water (26:12), and that it would not be built up again (26:14). These prophecies were spoken between 595 and 570 B.C. In 332 B.C. (250 years later) Alexander the Great attacked Tyre with his armies. The inhabitants had deserted the mainland city to take up residence on the island city of Tyre half a mile off shore. In order to reach them, Alexander built a causeway (which still exists today), connecting the mainland to the island city. As material for the causeway, Alexander had his soldiers cast the stones and timbers from which the city was built into the water, even to the point of scraping off all the topsoil down to bedrock. Hence, Tyre became a "bare rock", according to prophecy. If one were to visit Tyre today, they would find no mainland city. In its place there would be a flat surface which fishermen continue to use to spread their nets.

Around 748-690B.C., Hosea prophesied in Hosea 13 that Samaria would fall violently. Around 738-690 B.C. Micah prophesied that Samaria would become "*as a heap in the field*," that vineyards would be planted there, that the stones of the city would be poured down into the valley and that her foundations would be "*discovered*." According to history, Samaria fell by the sword in 722 B.C. when attacked by Sargon. It fell again in 331 B.C. by the hand of Alexander the Great and finally in 120 B.C. by the hand of John Hyrcanus. John Urquhart pointed out that, "The stones of the great city have been taken up by the great cultivators and piled together or thrown down the hill-side, that its site might be turned in to fields and vineyards." (McDowell, pg. 282, 283).

The greatest of all fulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament are those dealing with the Messiah. The gospels indicate that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies made 500 to 1500 years before He came to the earth. Seven hundred years before Jesus was born, His birthplace was foretold (Mic. 5:2 - Matt. 2:1). Seven hundred years before Jesus was born Isaiah said that He would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14 - Matt. 1:23). Five hundred years before the birth of Jesus, Isaiah described how He would be treated at His death (Isa. 53). One thousand years before the birth of Jesus, the Psalmist told of His pierced hands (Psa. 22:16 - Matt. 27:35). The apostle Paul summed up these prophecies saying, "*When they had fulfilled ALL that was prophesied concerning Him...*" (Acts 13:29). Hundreds of prophecies concerning one man, not one was left undone. This cannot be said of any other book in existence today.

The Unity of the Bible: In order for us to understand the significance of the unity of the Bible we need to first compare it to the level of unity generally found in writings of human origin. On this point, A. C. Armstrong in his book, *The Bible Under Trial* (1907), said, "It is a simple fact that there is nothing that can be properly called history in these other sacred books of the world. They are, as every student of them knows, for the most part jumbles of heterogeneous material, loosely placed together, without order, continuity or unity of any kind. There is no order, progress, or connection of parts...The Bible, on the other hand is a history with a beginning, a middle, and an end; a history of revelation; the history of the developing purpose of God, working up to a goal in the full-orbed discovery of the will of God for man's salvation in His Son Jesus Christ. There is nothing like this, nothing even approaching it in any other collection of sacred books in the world" (Baxter, pg. 186).

The simple truth is that man does not have the ability to organize even one document of literature, let alone 66, into a uniform, organized and concise work that even compares to the Bible. Yet, the Bible, although written over a time span of 1500 years by about 40 different human authors on three continents, contains not even one contradiction in its doctrinal teachings, historical, geographical, or archeological facts. There are many who have set out to find such contradictions and claim to have found some, but these supposed contradictions are easily found to be false by sound reasoning (see Geibler's, *When the Critics Ask*). There is **Doctrinal Unity** throughout the Bible. From Moses to the apostle John, the Bible writers never contradict one another (John 10:35). Since no human has ever been able accomplish this, the only conclusion we can make is that the Bible was directly inspired by God, and is therefore His written word.

There is **Organic Unity** throughout the Bible. That is, all parts of the Bible are necessary to the complete whole. Every book of the Bible is essential. Not one book of the Bible has proven fruitless in revealing the complete will of God to man. "*The entirety of Your word is truth*" (Ps. 119:160). The Bible is not complete without all of its books intact.

Its Honesty: In all secular history books, the heroes of a nation are made out to be almost supernaturally great. There seems to be no flaws in their person, (unless one is willing to dig deep). The Bible, on the other hand, is not so dishonest. The faults of even the most faithful are given in some detail to show the honesty of God and His ability to forgive those who repent. Read Gen. 9:20-21; 20:1ff; 2 Sam. 11; Mark 14:66-72.

External Evidence

Archeology and History: "Biblical archaeology is that branch of archaeological study which takes place in the countries where the events of the Biblical record transpired. The 'Biblical world,' or 'Bible lands,' includes the areas of Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), Egypt, Canaan, Italy and a few other areas" (Jenkins, pg. 58-59).

"The Moabite Stone, discovered in 1868 by a German missionary, was cut in 850 B.C., during the reign of Moshah, king of Moab. It tells of his being subjected to the Israelites. It also mentions that Omri, the captain of the Israelite host, was made king in that day. The Scriptures speak of that very event in 1 Kings 16:16" (Thompson, *IDBI*, pg. 61). "Genesis derives the ancestry of Israel from Mesopotamia. It is this fact with which archaeological findings concur. Albright says that it is 'beyond reasonable doubt that Hebrew Tradition was correct in tracing the Patriarchs directly back to the Balikh on the coincidence of Biblical and archaeological findings tracing the movement of these people out of the land of Mesopotamia'" (McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, Vol. 2, pg. 69, 1E). In other words, archeology agrees that the Hebrews actually came from where the Bible says.

"During the excavation of Jericho (1930-1936) Garstang found something so startling that a statement of what was found was prepared and signed by himself and two other members of the team. In reference to these findings Garstang says: 'As to the main fact, then, there remains no doubt: the walls fell outwards so completely that the attackers would be able to clamber up and over their ruins into the city.' Why so unusual? Because the walls of cities do not fall outwards, they fall inwards (on account of enemy forces pounding them in with battering rams, rocks, and so forth). And yet in Joshua 6:20 we read '...The wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city every man straight ahead, and they took the city.' The walls were made to fall outward," as the Bible records" (McDowell, pg. 69, 4E).

"The conduit, or tunnel, cut by Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chron. 32:30) was cleared of debris in 1909. It is now possible to walk through the tunnel which connects Gihon spring with the pool of Siloam. An inscription from the tunnel can be seen in the Istanbul Museum. The tunnel is nearly 1800 feet long, has an average height of just under 6 feet, is 23 to 26 inches wide, and at some places is about 150 feet below ground level" (Jenkins, pg. 63).

"In the book of Acts Luke frequently made geographical and political remarks on provinces, regions, and cities. The terms by which he reported local customs, the names he gave to local officials, and the reporting of local religious facts has been proven correct by archaeological inscriptions. The 'rulers of the city' (Greek: *politarchs*) in Thessalonica (Acts 17:6) was unknown in any classical author a few years ago. It has now been found in 19 inscriptions ranging from the 2nd century B.C. to the 3rd century A.D., as a title of magistrates in Macedonian cities. It is used five times of Thessalonica, which seems to have had five *politarchs* at the beginning of the first century A.D. and six in the middle of the second century. Publius is called the "chief man" of the Island of Malta (Acts 28:7). Inscriptions in both Latin and Greek have shown this to be a proper title. The *ecclesia* is presented as meeting in the theater at Ephesus (Acts 19:23ff; translated "assembly" in v. 32). Greek and Latin inscriptions have been found in the theater showing that the *ecclesia* did meet there. The open-air theater which seated nearly 25,000 has been excavated. The silver statue of Artemis (Diana) and other statues were 'to be set up in the theater during a full session of the *ecclesia*'" (Jenkins, pg. 64).

Science: It is only logical that if there is supreme God who created all things, then He must have a complete understanding of how all things work in nature. This being the case, we can ask, does God reveal any scientific truths within the scriptures and are they accurate? The answer to this is, Yes! Following are just a few examples of where the Bible reveals truths several hundred to several thousand years before men officially discovered them according to science. Much of the information in this section is taken from A.O. Schnabel's, *Has God Spoken?*, unless otherwise noted.

Astronomy: Bible writers: 1033-975 B.C. Solomon wrote in Proverbs 8:27, "*He inscribed a circle on the fact of the deep.*" 745-695 B.C. Isaiah 40:22, "*It is He that sitteth above the circle of the earth.*" The Hebrew word "*Khug*" is translated "circle." A more exact connotation would be "sphericity" or "roundness." The use of the word "deep" refers to the deep bodies of water, similar to our word "depth." The Hebrew word "*erets*" for "earth" is used in two senses by the ancient writers. One use denotes the entire world, while the more common usage was limited on only dry land portion as used in Genesis 1:10. History of Science: 384-322 B.C. In every civilization, other than Israel, the unearthed records show man thought the earth to be flat. The first arguments set forth for a spherical earth were by the famous Greek, Aristotle. These were: ships disappear over the horizon, and the circular shape seen on the moon during an eclipse of the later. Disappointingly few people, other than Aristotle's personal students, were convinced by this evidence. 1520 A.D. The common man held the earth was flat until "the introduction of the compass and improved sailing vessels which made possible the voyages of Columbus, Magellan, and others. These great discoveries caused a revolution in map making" which finally brought general acceptance of the fact that the earth is spherical.

Number of Stars: Gen. 15:5 (~1400 B.C.); Jer. 33:22 (~600B.C.). (cf. Isa. 40:26; Psa. 147:4; Rom. 1:20). 150 B.C. Hipparchus taught there were less than 3,000 stars, (A Greek astronomer and mathematician who discovered the precession of the equinoxes, calculated the length of the year to within 6 ½ minutes, compiled the first known star catalog, and made an early formulation of trigonometry). 150 A.D. Ptolemy counted 1,056 and claimed the actual number was not over 3,000. 1608 Galileo used a telescope and announced the number of stars "innumerable" (Joe Price, "The Bible and Science", from www.bibleanswer.com/evidence7.htm)

Geology: The entire earth has been under water. Moses, in speaking of the preparation of the earth for habitation wrote in Genesis 1:1, 6, and 9, "*And the earth was formless and void.*" "*Then God said, Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.*" "*The God said, 'Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear'; and it was so.*" Again, Moses spoke of the earth later being covered completely with water during the life of Noah, Genesis 7:19, 20, 24. "*And the water prevailed more and more upon the earth; so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered. The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered...And the water prevailed upon the earth one hundred and fifty days.*" David spoke of this as well in Ps. 104:6-9. In summarizing these writings, we see that they were aware that this planet was twice engulfed with water. Both times covering the tallest mountains. History of Science: Pre-1669 A.D. there was no thought or science that would allow man to study such things as fossils and minerals. Therefore there was no knowledge of the earth being submerged in water. 1669 A.D. Geology as a science was initiated in Italy when a Danish anatomist, Nicolas Steno, first found fossils. 1885 A.D. Edward Sues was one of the first geologists to publish a study based on the geologic framework of all countries. His research led to his discovery that all land surface has been under water, especially in his observations of the world's mountain ranges. It is now evident that even the oldest rock formations show traces of sedimentary origin." The fossils found in 1669 were of ocean life and were found in some of the highest peaks.

Oceanography: Paths of the Seas: Ps. 8:8 (~1000 B.C.). One day in 1855 A.D. during a temporary illness, Matthew Fontaine Maury, had his eldest son read to him from the Bible. Upon hearing Psalm 8:8 he had his son read it to him again then said, "It is enough, if the word of God says there are paths in the sea, they must be there, and I am going to find them." He set out to discover and chart the oceans' sea lanes and currents (Statue of Maury in Richland, VA).

Meteorology: The water vapor cycle: Job 36:27-28 (~2000-1600 B.C.); Eccl. 1:7 (~1000 B.C.). In these passages the Bible writers state that the sea does not fill up and actually describe the evaporation and water cycle. It was not until 350 B.C. that Aristotle comprehended the water-vapor cycle and published his "*Meteorologica.*" In 1770 A.D. Benjamin Franklin observed movement of water by storms (river-to-sea-river water cycle) (Price). He observed that the water from the ocean would evaporate,

clouds or storms would form and move over the land dropping rain. This rain is then funneled into rivers and then back into the ocean. "It is now known that the precipitation and evaporation rate is approximately 16,000,000 tons per second." (Schnabel, pg. 42).

Physics: The Universe is Decaying: 745-695 B.C. Isaiah 51:6, "*Lift up your eyes to the sky, then look to the earth beneath; for the sky will vanish like smoke, and the earth will wear out like a garment, and its inhabitants will die in like manner.*" In 538 B.C. Psalms 102:26, speaks of the heavens and the earth: "*Even they will perish, but Thou dost endure; and all of them wear out like a garment.*" 63 A.D. the Hebrew writer reveals this same principle in Heb. 1:10-11. The first indication science had that the universe was growing old and being used up, was the discovery of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, or the Law of Entropy in 1850 A.D.

Conclusion

These are but a few of the numerous evidences that support the authenticity of the Bible as the inspired word of God. It is true that archeology does not *prove* the Bible to be inspired. It merely supports or validates the claim that has already been made. The Bible is 100% accurate in these areas, so much so that some archaeologists use the Bible as a reference while doing their work.

When we look at the massive amount of evidence which supports the Bible's claims, it is extremely difficult to keep from stating the obvious truth: God has spoken!

New Testament Authority

Most people recognize the New Testament as a good story about a man named Jesus, or as a "love letter" from God. In 2 John 9-11 however, we get a much different sense as to the purpose of the New Testament Scriptures. *"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds."* In light of what this passage says we would do well to consider where the New Testament came from, what it says or reveals, and whether or not we are supposed to do anything because of it. An honest study of the New Testament will show that, without a doubt, the New Testament is God's revelation and that it contains the law that His people must adhere to today.

The Development of the New Testament

God Hebrews 1:1-2: *"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds."* This is where it all comes from. All that has been revealed about spiritual things has been given by God. Peter confirmed this truth in 1 Peter 1:20-21 where he wrote, *"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Before His Son came to the earth God spoke through the prophets of old. The purpose of that revelation was so that God's people could read it and obey it. But in these "last days" (from the days of Jesus to today) the word of God is revealed by Christ Jesus. Just as the Jews were expected to obey the prophets in the Old Testament, we must also obey the Son of God today who speaks to us from heaven. "See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven" (Hebrews 12:25).*

Jesus Hebrews 1:1-2: In Matthew 17:5 Jesus had taken Peter, James, and John up to a high mountain where He was transfigured before their eyes. With Jesus also stood Moses and Elijah. The significance of this transfiguration is that God shows three of His greatest prophets all standing together. Moses, who mediated the first covenant. Elijah who was taken up in a chariot of fire, and Jesus. In the midst of the three disciples God spoke aloud saying, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"* (Matthew 17:5). Notice, God did not tell us to hear Moses or Elijah, because Jesus alone is our lawgiver today. He is the one whom we must hear; He is the one to whom God gave all authority (Matthew 28:19). God Himself commanded that all men listen to Jesus for He is His Son. As Lord and Christ, Jesus has been given all authority. Therefore everything He says is truth and every command He gives is part of the law that we must obey (John 12:48). Jesus is the great prophet whom Moses and the Old Testament prophets promised would turn away the iniquity of man! (Acts 3:19-26).

The Holy Spirit John 14:26: *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you."* Jesus, who was given all authority by God promised to send a helper to teach and bring to remembrance all that He had taught. Whatever the Holy Spirit revealed was from Jesus, which in turn was from God (John 16:14-15). Therefore what the Holy Spirit revealed is the word of God. In John 15:26 Jesus again promised that the Holy Spirit would reveal the truth which would come from the Father, and He will testify of Jesus, who is the Son of God. In John 16:13 Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would guide men unto all the truth, and that nothing would be left out. *"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come."* The truth that He revealed was given by the authority of God; everything that He

revealed came directly from Jesus. For this reason Paul was able to boldly proclaim that the revelation given by the Holy Spirit was the mind of Christ. "*For 'who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?' But we have the mind of Christ*" (1 Corinthians 2:16).

The Apostles Ephesians 3:3-5: "...how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets." In 1 Corinthians 2:10 Paul affirmed that the "*The deep things of God*" were revealed to the apostles and prophets by the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 3:3-5 we learn that the apostles wrote down that revelation. For that reason Peter was able to refer to Paul's writings as "scripture" in 1 Peter 3:1-2. Through this act the final link in the chain of authority for the New Testament is complete. For the writings of the apostles and prophets are known to us today as the New Testament scriptures.

The New Testament Scriptures: By this act the writings in the New Testament became the written word of God: The command of the Lord. "*If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord*" (1 Corinthians 14:37). We must understand that as the commands of the Lord every person is commanded to obey the things that are revealed. "And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed" (2 Thessalonians 3:14). The "epistles" in epistle are the "written messages" (Strong's) of the apostles and prophets to the New Testament Christians. Notice that if we do not obey what is written, we are to be ashamed. Why? Because what is written is the "command of God" and therefore must be followed as the word of God. As such, when we read the New Testament scriptures then is no different than hearing God speak these words directly to us. This is the authority God places upon the New Testament Scriptures.

What Does the New Testament Reveal?

In Hebrews 12:22-24 we learn that it reveals the new covenant between God and Man. "*You have come...to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant...*" In Hebrews 8:6-8, 12 we learn that this covenant says that those who come to Jesus, who become His disciples (Christians), will have their lawless deeds forgotten, they will be forgiven. In 1 Timothy 6:11-12 we learn that those who "pursue righteousness" and live by faith in God and in His power can have eternal life.

We also learn that the New Testament is the "whole truth" which Jesus promised would come from the Holy Spirit. For this reason, to take away from it, to add to it, or to do anything above and beyond what it was would be to disobey the will of God. God is speaking when we read the New Testament Scriptures. We will not hear His voice outside this final revelation to mankind. The New Testament Scriptures, including the epistles, are the words of Jesus Christ. To reject what the apostles taught is to reject Christ (Matt. 10:40; John 13:20). "*He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me*" (Matthew 10:40). "*Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit*" (1 Thessalonians 4:8).

We cannot place the teaching in the gospels over the teaching in the Epistles or visa versa. John 14:26 includes the gospels for the Spirit "brought to remembrance" (the gospels), "He will teach you all things" (the Epistles). Therefore every part of the New Testament is equal in value and authority as every other part.

Anything that does not agree with the New Testament is not truth. Since "all truth" is found in the New Testament any other books that claims to be inspired is not truth (Book of Mormon, Koran, Catholic catechisms, etc.). The truth that was taught in one congregation was the same truth that was taught in another (1 Corinthians 4:17; 7:17). The Epistles addressed to one congregation or another applied to all who read them (Colossians 4:16). Christians who refused to submit to the teaching of the apostles were

marked as unfaithful (2 Thessalonians 3:14). Any deviation from the New Testament teaching receives condemnation (Galatians 1:6-8; 1 Timothy 6:3; 2 John 9-11).

What Must I do?

When Jesus died on the cross He not only established a New Law, but He also established a New Covenant. The New Testament is that covenant which we must also obey if we want to have the life that Jesus offers. In light of this covenant the Jews asked the question, "*What shall we do*" (Acts 2:37)? In Acts 2:38 Peter told them exactly what they must do. "*Repent every one of you and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins.*" According to God's New Testament (covenant) those who obey this good news of salvation are freed from their sins and joined to God as His children (Galatians 3:26-27; 1 John 3:1). Our part of that covenant, once we have entered into it, is to "walk worthy of the calling with which we have been saved" (Ephesians 4:1-3). To help us in this endeavor we have the New Testament scriptures to guide us according to which we are able to walk as Jesus walked and to know God (1 John 2:3-6). For this reason all men are commanded by Jesus to repent of their sins and turn to Him in obedience. If you love Jesus then you will obey His commandments as they are delivered to us in the New Testament (John 14:15).

“All Authority Has Been Given To Me”

Matthew 28:18

In Matt. 28:18, before Jesus gave the Great Commission, He established the authority by which He sent His disciples into the world. He said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." Understanding the significance of this authority is vital to the spiritual life of every Christian. Jesus has all authority, not only on earth, but in heaven as well. This means that He has supreme rule. In the Old Testament it was prophesied that the Christ, the Savior of the world, would become king over God's kingdom (1 Chron. 17:11). In Acts 2:30-31 Peter tells us that this promise of a king was fulfilled in Christ at His resurrection. "Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ." Having sat down on His throne on high, Jesus has the preeminence over all creation. "And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence" (Col. 1:17-18). In 1 Tim. 6:15 the apostle Paul refers to Jesus as the "King of kings and Lord of lords."

Why is this important? Because, in preaching the gospel in Acts 17:30 Paul warns us that Jesus, as king, is going to judge the world. He is going to judge all of us as to whether our deeds were good or bad; in obedience or disobedience to His authority. "...but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31). Because He is king, the words of Jesus are LAW. He spoke concerning the authority of His words in John 12:48 saying, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him -- the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." In other words, Jesus is coming to judge the world where He will save the righteous and punish the unrighteous. The standard (the law) by which He will judge all men is His word. According to the Great Commission, the purpose of Christians in preaching the gospel is to save as many as possible from the coming judgment. Remember that Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved"? Saved from what? Saved from the judgment which He is bringing upon the whole world.

The reason Jesus is going to judge the world is because since the beginning men have walked in disobedience to God. Our purpose on this earth is to fear Him and keep His commandments (Eccl. 12:13), but we have not fulfilled that purpose "for all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23). But, in Christ God has given us the opportunity to undo the effects of that disobedience; to turn back to Him and serve Him as we were created to do. Therefore, when the apostle Paul went about preaching the gospel he commanded all men, "that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance" (Acts 26:20).

That is the message that we are to be preaching according to the Great commission. We are to teach all men about the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ and in so doing show that He has been glorified in heaven as King and will judge the world. If we want salvation we need to turn to Him in obedience. We need to make Him King in our lives. How do we do this? By "observing all things that He has commanded us."

When a person obeys the gospel he is not just joining a church and he is not simply making himself a better person. When a person comes to Christ by faith and is baptized he is making a commitment to submit to Christ in all things. He is saying that he believes that Jesus is in fact King, and that he will live before Christ in total obedience. Paul illustrated this principle in himself in Gal. 2:20 when he said, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now

live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Therefore, in making Jesus our King, we live as if He is living in us. Though we are alive in our physical bodies, we put those bodies to work for Him, serving Him in all things. Without this commitment one cannot be a disciple of Christ. Without this commitment one cannot be saved in Christ because we are told that He is the author of eternal salvation "to all who obey Him" (Heb. 5:9). Why? Because He is King!

Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Jesus said, "for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24). True faith in Jesus Christ requires more than acknowledging that He was a real person. True faith requires acknowledging that He is king, that He has all authority, and it requires our submission to that authority. That is why Jesus said to teach them to observe all that He commanded. Only when we live in obedience to His word will we know true joy, true peace, and true hope. Only when we live in obedience to His word will we truly have salvation in Him. Do you believe in Jesus Christ? If you do, then cast off the sins and cares of this world. Come to Christ with a humble heart and a meek and gentle spirit. Put on Christ (Gal. 3:26-27) and begin living the way God intended for us to live. That is the call of the Great commission. Are you willing to respond?

Individual And Collective Action

When an individual believes and obeys the gospel, his sins are taken away in Christ, he has the hope of eternal salvation, and he is added to the Lord's church according to Acts 2:47. Those who become Christians have an individual responsibility to uphold godly principles in every realm of their lives. They are individually responsible for their own salvation.

However, when the Lord established the church, He did not leave it without any organization. That is, He did not leave individuals to fend for themselves in a sinful world all alone. Rather, the Lord organized the church in a local setting so that individuals can assemble together as a body and function collectively as a local church. Therefore, Paul was able to say, "*The churches of Christ greet you*" in Rom. 16:16 because he had helped to organize many local churches. The letters to the Corinthians were addressed to the local church in Corinth. Likewise, the letters to the Thessalonians were addressed to the local church in Thessalonica. God's wisdom is seen in the organization of the local church because it allows His people to gain strength and comfort from one another and to combine their efforts to fulfill His work.

Organization Implies Design

The fact that God chose to bring individuals together in an organized local setting implies that He had a purpose for doing so. This conclusion is based on the universal principle that organization implies purpose. God designed the universe with a purpose in mind. Men organize book clubs and bowling leagues with specific purposes in mind. Likewise, God organized the local church because He intended for it to fulfill a specific role in the religious realm. Seeing that the local church is made up of individuals, it must also be understood that the role of the local church is different than that of the individual. This much is taught throughout the New Testament.

In Acts 4:32-35, Christians were contributing their funds to a collection that was intended to help needy saints. But in Acts 5, there was one couple named Ananias and Sapphira who sold their property and held back a portion of the proceeds, but told people that they were giving all of the money. Their sin was not that they failed to give all of their money, but that they lied about how much they were giving. In his rebuke, Peter made a statement that shows the difference between individual and collective. He said concerning the money, "*While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your control?*" (Acts 5:4). As an individual, Ananias had authority over his own money and could do whatever he wanted with it. But once that money was put into the collection, no longer did the individual have authority over it, but God; it was dedicated to aid the collective body in fulfilling whatever purpose God intended. There are various other passages in the New Testament where God makes a distinction between the work of the individual and the work of the local church, which we will look at more closely later on (1 Tim. 5:3-8; 1 Cor. 11:20-23, 33-34; Acts 5:4; 1 Cor. 16:1-2).

In spite of the above principles, it is believed by many that the local church has the authority to do everything that individual Christians can do. That is, if an individual can hold social meals and other activities in his home, then the local church has authority to fund social activities for its members. Or if an individual can enter into a business venture, then the local church too can establish its own business or send money to hospitals and camps and charitable funds. For one to believe such a doctrine is a failure to understand what the Scriptures teach concerning the local church. If we are truly going to live and act as the church that Jesus established and organized in the New Testament, then we must come to understand the difference between the work of the individual and the work of the local church. If we do not understand this, then we place ourselves in the same position as the denominations.

The Work of the Individual

Once an individual becomes a Christian, he is obligated to live godly in every realm of his life: In the Home, the community, in business, in government, and in the local church. He is a Christian every second of every day and must strive to live as such all the time. There really are no limitations as to what the individual can do so long as he respects God's authority and righteousness in all things. An individual has a responsibility to care for the physical needs of his family (1 Tim. 5:8). To fulfill that responsibility he is able to work to earn money (1 Thess. 4:11), own his own business (Col. 4:1), or to make investments (James 4:13-17). A man has responsibilities toward his wife and the wife toward her husband (1 Cor. 7:2-7). Christians must submit to civil authority (Rom. 13:1ff.).

Individuals also have responsibilities concerning their devotion to God. Pure and undefiled religion is to care for those who are in need (James 1:27). Individuals are commanded to pray (Matt. 6:6), study God's word (2 Tim. 2:15), teach the gospel as they have opportunity (Acts 18:24-26), and to do their part in the work of the local church (Eph. 4:16). Whatever is good and honorable for a man to do in his personal life, that is what he must do in every aspect of his life (James 4:17).

The Work of the Collective

In defining the work of the local church, God is much more specific than with the individual. For this reason, the work of the collective is much more limited than that of the individual. For example, where an individual is obligated to care for widows in his family, the church is only authorized to care for those who Christians and are "*widows indeed*, and faithful to the Lord (1 Tim. 5:3-16). If a widow has surviving family members, they must care for her so that the church may not be burdened (vs. 16). Therefore, there is a difference between the responsibility of the church and that of the individual. Remember the account of Ananias and Sapphira; that they could do whatever they wanted with their money as long as it was in their control. But what happens when that money is placed into the collection of the church? Who determines what happens to it then? Since that money is devoted to doing the Lord's will, God is the one who determines what happens with it. Though the individual has authority to act in every realm of life, the Scriptures confine the work of the local church to four categories: Evangelism, worship, edification, and benevolence of needy saints.

Evangelism: In the Scriptures, the funds that were placed in the church treasuries were used to support preachers such as Peter, Paul, Barnabas, and the other apostles (1 Cor. 9:1-12, 14). By that means the collective body was working together to support the preaching of the gospel.

Edification: Edification is how the church is built up through teaching God's word and exhorting all the members of the body to grow in faith, knowledge, and godliness. In Matt. 28:20 Jesus commanded that those who obey the gospel learn to do all that He commanded. In Eph. 4:11 it says that Jesus gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers for the equipping the saints and edifying the body. Such edification can only take place when individual Christians are working together as a collective body (Heb. 10:24-25).

Worship: Worship in the New Testament was also designed to be done as collective effort. Though individuals can worship God on their own, there are some aspects of New Testament worship that cannot be fulfilled outside of the local church. Paul said that the Lord's Supper was to be eaten "*When you come together*" (1 Cor. 11:33). Nowhere is an individual authorized to eat the Lord's Supper outside of the assembly of the local church. The collection must also take place when the church comes together on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1, 2). We can sing on our own, but God also commands that we "*speak to one another, in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, making melody in your heart to the Lord.*" (Eph. 5:19). This requires collective action. Therefore, the church is commanded to worship as a collective body.

Benevolence of needy saints: In 1 Tim. 5:3ff the collective body is authorized to care for the needs of widows indeed. Also, in Acts 11:29-30 and 2 Cor. 8:3-4, we see church funds being used to care for needy saints. When a local congregation is unable to care for its own needs, God authorizes other

congregations to send aid. At no point, however, do we see the local church using its funds to support charitable organizations for unbelievers.

Conclusion

Where God is specific, we have no authority but to do exactly as He commanded. Concerning the work of the local church, God is very specific. He designed the local church in order to fulfill a different role than the individual Christian. But if we go beyond God's purpose for the church, as many churches have done today, then we can no longer call ourselves the church that is of Christ. If local congregations want to be New Testament churches, they must stop doing things that God has not authorized. Social activities, youth programs, charity organizations are things that God allows individuals to participate in, but they have no place in the work of the local church. Let us respect the limitations that God places on collective action and work with all of our might to do that which He does command.