

**Seeking the Old Paths
Or
The Need For Authority**

Introduction:

- A. Through Jeremiah the Lord commanded an apostate people to, “Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, Where the good way is, and walk in it...” (Jer. 6:16). Only by walking in the old paths would God's people find His blessing once again.
- B. Is it not time for spiritual Israel to heed this counsel? It is always a matter of wisdom (and duty) to take our bearings from the map of inspiration in order to ascertain as to whether we are on the right course.
- C. Jeremiah's statement focuses attention upon Divine authority. Throughout all Bible history this one true principle is repeatedly emphasized: Man can please God and enjoy heavens approval ONLY in faithful obedience.

I. *The Key To Unity*

- A. Divine Authority
 - 1. 1 Jn. 1:6-7 tells us by walking in truth we are united with God.
 - 2. And it is that same basis (truth) upon which brethren enjoy unity.
- B. Jesus prayed His disciples would be unified, just as He and the Father were - Jn. 17:20-21
 - 1. This is accomplished by understanding principles alike.
 - 2. So it is unquestionably the unauthorized paths of human invention which destroy fellowship, both with God and with brethren - Matt. 15:9; Amos 3:3
- C. To be “in Christ” takes more than a sign in front of a meeting place.
 - 1. In Eph. 5:24, Paul describes Christ's church as "subject to Christ...in everything."
 - 2. This is reasonable since Eph. 1:22 has already stated, God “gave Him to be head over ALL things to the church.”
 - 3. Most are familiar with this principle, yet many do not practice it.

II. *The Need For Authority.*

- A. Standards keep everyone on the same track.
 - 1. National Bureau of Standards, Atomic and Cesium clocks, Dictionaries, etc.
 - 2. All these set standards so everyone understands alike.
 - 3. What if I say a line is 3 inches long and another says it is 7.6 centimeters? Would you understand it to be the same length without looking up the standard?
- B. Standards provide a common basis and understanding for man's social good.
- C. God provides guidance for man's spiritual good in the form of law, precepts and commandment, because man is not capable of charting his own course - Jer 10:23’ Prov 16:25
- D. Jesus Christ has ALL authority - Matt 28:18; 17:5
 - 1. Paul expresses the completeness of Christ's authority in Col. 3:17.
 - 2. Those who disrespect or rebel against His authority must meet God's wrath - Rom 2:5-11; 2 Thess. 1:7-9

III. *The New Testament Is Christ's Will As Taught By The Apostles.*

- A. There are some who say all we need are the words of Jesus.
 - 1. They are right, but in the sense they mean.
 - a. Jesus always taught the truth,
 - b. But He didn't teach ALL the truth during His personal ministry.
 - 2. Therefore, we need the things taught by the apostles of Jesus also.
- B. The apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit after Jesus ascension into heaven - Jn. 16:7-14; 14:26
- C. The word of God was given to them - Jn. 17:8-14
- D. They were given the keys to the kingdom - Matt. 16:9; 18:18

1. The key was a symbol of authority (Isa. 22:22, speaking of Christ).
2. According to Jewish usage, binding meant to forbid it. To loose meant to permit or allow.
3. Some have therefore decided the apostles had authority to make law.
 - a. This is not true.
 - b. They were only carrying out heavens decisions; not heaven ratifying their decision.
4. Matt. 16:19 translated literally would read, "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth, shall have been being bound in heaven and whatsoever you shall loose on earth, shall have been being loose in heaven."
5. This gives the idea they were only authorizing things heaven had already authorized.

IV. *The Bible Only Teaches In Three Ways.*

A. Direct Command or Precept.

1. "You shall not murder," - Ex. 20:13; Rom. 13:9
2. "Repent and be baptized," - Acts 2:38

B. Approved Example.

1. There are some examples not approved by God.
 - a. Peter's conduct in Gal. 2:11
 - b. 1 Cor. 5:1-13
2. That's why we say it must be approved.

C. Necessary Inference or Logical Conclusion.

1. Something that is not expressly stated or specifically exemplified, yet it is necessarily implied or inferred by the clear import and meaning of the language used (couldn't miss the point).
2. In Acts 8:38, we draw the conclusion it was Phillip doing the baptizing, not the eunuch.
3. But not all inferences or conclusions are logical.
 - a. Some infer infant baptism from the household baptisms of Acts 16:15 and 16:33.
 - 1) This is not a logical conclusion, but a forced one.
 - 2) There are many households without infants.
 - b. Some read of "love feasts" in Jude 12 and infer kitchens and banquet facilities.

V. *The Methods Are Illustrated In The Lord's Supper.*

A. There is no single command that gives all the details of the Lord's Supper and its observance on the first day of the week. Therefore, we must study everything God has to say on the subject, because Psa. 119:160 tells us the "entirety of Your word it truth."

B. Paul states in 1 Cor. 11:24-25, the COMMAND of Jesus when He instituted the Supper in Matt. 26, "This do ... in remembrance of Me."

C. By APPROVED EXAMPLE in Acts 20:7, we are shown the first day of the week is the appointed time to carry out the command.

1. Apostolic examples indicate a pattern for us to follow - Phil 3:17; 4:9

D. The frequency of the observance may be obtained from NECESSARY INFERENCE.

1. The Israelites understood the command, "Remember the Sabbath day..." (Ex. 20:8) to mean every Sabbath day.
2. If the observance is to be yearly the month and the date would have to be given.
 - a. The day of Atonement was observed on the 10th day of the 7th month.
 - b. We observe Independence Day on the 4th day of July.
3. If the observance is to be monthly, the day of the month must be given - Num 10:10

Conclusion:

- A. If we are to remain pleasing to God, we must observe the authority of Jesus Christ and not that of man.
- B. The next lesson will deal with the nature of authority.