How do we find the authority to act?

* Authority is the “power” and or the “right” to act.
* We acknowledge this every time we tap on our brakes when suddenly approaching a police car.
* We recognize higher levels of authority when an appeal to older court case decisions decided upon by the Supreme Court.
* We enjoy order and peace in our lives because of authority.
* Since we appeal and recognize authority in our secular lives, surely we see the need to also do so in our spiritual lives.
* By “whose authority” are we to acknowledge in establishing religious practices of worship?
* Jesus was asked in Mark 11.28, “By what authority do you do these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?”
1. Note Jesus’ answer in the text in vv. 29, 30, “And Jesus said to them. ‘I will ask you one question, and you answer Me, and then I will tell you by what authority I do these things. Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men? Answer Me.’”
2. Jesus offers for our consideration the only 2-sources one can appeal to. (1) Heaven (i.e., God), (2) men.
3. Was the authority from heaven or from men? (Matthew 21.25).
4. Matthew 15.9, “In vain do they worship Me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.”
5. Matthew 7.21, “…but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.”
6. We are to “not go beyond the things which are written” (1 Corinthians 4.6).
7. We cannot add to, nor subtract from God’s word (cf. Revelation 22.18-19).
8. When we go beyond the teachings of Christ, we do not have God (cf. 2 John 9).
9. Jesus commands that all who worship God “must worship Him in spirit and truth.” (John 4.24). God’s word is “truth” (cf. John 17.17).
* So – appealing to God’s authority is our only basis for scriptural unity. Jesus prayed to the Father that those who would believe on Him through the word would “all be one: even as thou, Father, art in Me, and I in thee…” (John 17.21).
1. How was this to be achieved?
2. John 17.11, “Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me. That they may be one, even as we are.” (cf. John 17.11).
3. When we do things in the “name of the Lord” we are acting by His authority.

* HOW do we establish authority?
* HOW do we go from what the Scriptures say to what they say to us?
* How can we know what God’s will is for our lives?
* 3-forms of Bible Authority that govern us today. But, before we get to these 3, please realize that God communicates His will in the same ways that we communicate our will. When we speak to someone there are 3-basic ways that we communicate with others.
* We can (1) tell someone something, (2) show someone something, or (3) imply something to someone.
* I think it’s interesting to note that we are created in God’s image (cf. 1.27). Yes, we have an eternal soul. God is eternal. So in this way we are created in the image of God. Additionally, however, (1) we have the ability to think, (2) to reason, and (3) to use logic. So much like God, we have been created as intelligent beings.
1. Direct Command/Statement – simply a “thus says the Lord” – where God demands that something be done or not done, as in the 10-Commandments (cf. Exodus 20). God can tell us something in a specific way using direct statements both positive and negative. “Thou shalt…” do this or that. “Thou shalt not…” do this or that.
2. Approved Examples – is where we are shown how the disciples practiced their faith in the 1st Century – under the teaching of the inspired apostles – therefore meeting God’s approval. “Be imitators of me as I also am of Christ” (cf. Philippians 3.17; 4.9; 1 Corinthians 4.16-17; 1 Corinthians 11.1).
3. Sometimes the question is asked concerning “approved examples,” Are there examples that are not binding?” Yes.
4. Bad examples – examples of actions which were (wrong) not approved.
5. Peter’s refusal to eat with the Gentiles) Galatians 2.11-14).
6. Temporary examples – such as miraculous spiritual gifts and the manifestation of them. They were temporary for a number of reasons – but we’re clearly told that they would end, (cf. 1 Corinthians 13.10).
7. Incidental examples: that do not show a specific pattern of conduct; for example, there is no pattern concerning the “place” of worship. Social customs: the “holy kiss” (Romans 16.16), and possibly the “head covering.” (1 Corinthians 11.16).
8. How do I determine if examples are binding?
9. Harmony – harmony in the action and in all other scriptures bearing the same subject.
10. Uniformity – variation is seen in incidental examples.No variation is seen in essential examples.
11. Examples of conversion contain different circumstances but uniform actions.
12. Universal application – no example can be seen as incidental that does not have a universal application.
13. No action of the apostles, Christians, or churches is to be considered binding beyond the proper province of that action.
14. Necessary Conclusions/inferences – involve something that is not specifically stated but can be logically implied based upon what is said. Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch (Acts 8.35); based upon the eunuch’s question (Acts 8.36) it’s necessary to infer or to conclude that preaching Jesus includes Baptism in water, the need to obey Jesus.
* Some question the use of Necessary Inferences due to having to use the human mind; one needs logic to draw a conclusion or necessary inference.
* Typically, we convey information either in an “explicit” or “implicit” way.
* Explicit (meaning) nothing is implied, as we fully state the subject.
* Implicit (meaning) we infer something rather than saying it directly.
1. Another word for “Implicit” is “inference.”
2. An inference is simply a conclusion by implication.
3. A conclusion is drawn because the evidence demands it.
4. It isn’t a hunch or a guess.
* Rules of Inference:
* Just as specific logical rules determine when an example is binding – particular rules can prove to be beneficial with necessary inferences.
* For example:
1. Acts 8.27-39 –
2. In this passage we see that the Ethiopian Eunuch was taught and baptized by Philip.
3. But – nothing is said about “why” Philip baptized him.
4. And nothing is said about “why’ being baptized was not only a matter of urgency for the eunuch – and nothing is said about “why” the eunuch (upon seeing the body of water – wanted to be baptized.
5. Philip taught the eunuch Jesus. We aren’t told directly “what” this included.
6. Inferred is – something in the teaching of Jesus involved one being baptized in water. And possibly that it was rather urgent.
7. It wasn’t by Philip’s prompting – saying to the eunuch – look – there’s water – I think you should be baptized.
8. “Why” did the eunuch want to be baptized?
9. “Why” (or for what reason is a person baptized)?
10. Other passages show that “baptism” is for the remission of sins (cf. Acts 2.38) and in “baptism” one’s “sins are washed away (cf. Acts 22.16).
11. So, it’s implied that the teaching of Jesus included the necessity of water immersion and why one is baptized.
* NOTE: If a cause ALWAYS brings forth a particular result, and if the cause is the only way to obtain the result, and the result is stated, then it MUST be necessarily implied or inferred that the cause occurred.
* Acts 18.8 tells us that Crispus believed in the Lord with his entire house, but the passage says nothing about what produced his faith.
1. However, Romans 10.17 tells us that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. So, that’s our answer.
2. It’s necessarily inferred that Crispus listened to or was taught the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
* IF the language structure requires a particular conclusion itself, the conclusion is necessarily inferred although unstated.
* Another example of this would be the frequency of the Lord’s Supper.
1. The instance of observing it on Sunday would lead us to conclude that we must take it every Sunday.
2. Old Testament examples support this: Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy. Is that 1-Sabbath Day each year? – quarterly? – semi-annually? I think you know what’s implied.

ACTS 15 EXAMPLE ABOUT THE QUESTION OF CIRCUMCISION:

* After the 1st Missionary Journey of Paul and Barnabas, they returned to Antioch and “began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles” (Acts 14.27).
* Certain Jews came down from Judea insisting that these Gentiles be circumcised to be saved.
* After much debate and discussion – the church in Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to discuss this question: Is it necessary to circumcise the Gentiles and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses? (cf. Acts 15.5).
* A discussion about the question of circumcision.
1. Certain ones were teaching that the Gentile Christians had to be circumcised as was required under the Law of Moses (Acts 15.1, 5)
* All 3-forms of Bible interpretation are employed in this discussion:
1. First – they draw a **necessary inference** from the events that had occurred.
2. God sent Peter to the Gentiles (namely Cornelius).
3. God had showed Peter a vision 3-times.
4. Peter correctly (without being told directly) – Peter correctly inferred that he was talking about men (Acts 10.28).
5. The Holy Spirit fell upon Cornelius and his family – inferring that God approved of them.
6. Acts 10.17 –
7. Acts 15.6-12, 19, 28 -
8. Second – they cite **approved examples**.
9. The point out that God gave them the Holy Spirit even as the apostles in the beginning (Acts 15.8) –
10. That they had labored among the Gentiles, and God did signs and wonders (Acts 15.12).
11. Third – direct statements or **commands** are employed. Peter told how God commanded him to go to the house of Cornelius (Acts 15.7), and James cited the words of the prophets (Acts 15.7).
* All 3-are also used in various aspects of the Lord’s Supper.
1. Command – the fact that we are to partake of it – Matthew 26.26-28; 1 Corinthians 11.24 –
2. Example – we learn the day we are to take of it by example – Acts 20.7 (let me add that IF there were examples of the Lord’s Supper being taken on other days of the week – the example of only on Sunday (Acts 20.7) couldn’t be a binding example.
3. Third – the frequency is by necessary inference – Acts 20.7 – every week has a 1st day – Sunday – drawing us to of necessity conclude that the Lord’s Supper was observed every 1st day-of-the-week by the Lord’s church in the 1st Century.

IMPORTANT POINT:

* Not all inferences are necessary.
* In the case of Lydia and the Philippian jailer, Luke wrote that they and their “household” (Acts 16.15, 33) were baptized.
1. Does the reference to “household” prove, or necessarily infer that infant baptism is authorized by God?
2. Does the text logically lend you to come to that conclusion?
3. Or, if you came to the conclusion that infants need to be baptized – would that contradict other clear and easy to understand passages that have to do with herring and believing?
4. There must be “harmony” in our conclusion concerning the Scriptures.

SUMMARY:

* We are commanded to do everything in the name of Jesus Christ. (cf. Colossians3.17).
1. To do everything in the name of the Lord means to do everything by or with His authority. See also 1 Corinthians 4.6.
* Examples of men acting or doing without God’s authority include:
1. Cain – Genesis 4b-5
2. Both brothers offered sacrifices – Genesis 4.3, 4
3. Sometimes I think that Cain wasn’t sincere or serious about his sacrifice, but I don’t know that to be factual.
4. God accepted and approved of Abel’s sacrifice because it was offered by faith (cf. Hebrews 11.4).
5. To do something by “faith” means that God’s instructions are followed.
6. Cain didn’t follow God’s instructions and his sacrifice was not acceptable.

DOES THE SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES ESTABLISH AUTHORITY?

* Some suggest that where the Scriptures are silent that they are FREE to act. What they mean by that is: If there isn’t a “Thou shalt not…” then they can act.
* Mechanical instruments of music is a good example of this. Some base their authority to use them in worship services solely on the basis that God has not specifically “condemned” them.

EXAMPLE OF THE SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES NOT GIVING AUTHORITY

* Hebrews 7.14
1. The Hebrew writer argued that Jesus could not serve as High-Priest under the Old Law. Because under the Old Law only those of the tribe of Levi could be high-priest.
2. The Hebrew writer says, “For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which Moses spoke nothing concerning the priesthood.” In other words, Moses neither said “yea” or “nay” specifically Judah and a high-priest. The Old Testament doesn’t include a verse that says to the effect: “Thou shalt not be a priest if you are from the tribe of Judah.”
3. The interpretation of this passage in Hebrews is: One from the tribe of Judah is not authorized by Moses and the Old Law.
4. Since the OT doesn’t specifically prohibit those from the tribe of Judah becoming high-priest, could Jesus have been a high-priest under the Old Law? Yes or No.
5. Since Jesus is (currently) our high-priest (without going any further) what does that necessarily infer? Answer: That the Old Law is not in effect today, and that we must have a New Law (or else Jesus could not and world not be a high-priest).

DIRECT COMMAND EXAMPLES

* A direct command is a direct statement – either positive or negative.
1. “Thou shalt..”
2. “Thou shalt not…”
* Peter – on the Day of Pentecost – in response to a question in Acts 2.37 this question implies that the people were asking “What must we do to be saved?”
1. Peter’s response in a command.
2. Acts 2.38, “Repent and be baptized…”
* The observance of the Lord’s Supper is authorized by a direct command.
* 1. Matthew 26.26-30
1. Paul also gives a direct command to eat and drink of the Lord’s supper in 1 Corinthians 11.25.

APPROVED EXAMPLE (EXAMPLES)

1. Once again, an approved example is an example where people were doing something that was acceptable unto God.
2. Acts 20.7 is an approved example.

NECESSARY CONCLUSION/INFERENCE

1. By necessary I mean that no other reasonable conclusion can be drawn from the text.
2. Acts 20.7
3. It’s necessary to conclude that the Lord’s church is to take of the Lord’s Supper upon the 1st Day of the Week. And since every week has a first day, then we are to partake of the Lord’s Supper every first day of the week.