

FIRST PRINCIPLES



OF THE ORACLES OF GOD

Thematic Studies
In Bible Basics

Prepared By Jeff Smith



FIRST PRINCIPLES OF THE ORACLES OF GOD

Table Of Contents

<u>Lesson No.</u>	<u>Lesson Title</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
1	General Introduction	1
2	"Except You Be Converted" (<i>Conversion</i>)	5
3	No Greater Name Under Heaven (<i>Unity</i>)	8
4	The Bible: God's <i>Only</i> Book	12
5	The Difference Between The 2 Covenants	17
6	"By What Authority...?" (<i>Authority - Part A</i>)	21
7	"By What Authority...?" (<i>Authority - Part B</i>)	29
8	"The Secret Things Belong To God" (<i>Silence</i>)	38
9	"I Will Build My Church" (<i>The Church</i>)	42

Copyright © 2007

Permission is granted for free reproduction of this material.
No alterations without prior permission from the author.

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God Thematic Studies In Bible Basics

Lesson 1 – General Introduction

When the most basic concepts or elements of some topic are discussed, we often refer to it as the “*ABC’s*.” The image most likely to pop into our minds are those early days in elementary school when we first learned the alphabet. One must master “A...B...C...” before he can be proficient at spelling, writing, or reading. This type of logical thinking has been applied to all sorts of subjects.

- Chefs on T.V. talk about the “*ABC’s of Cooking*” – principles one must master before he can prepare those masterpiece dishes found on menus in fancy restaurants.
- Coaches preach about the “*ABC’s of Football*” – disciplines of blocking, tackling, etc. Entire spring training periods are often devoted to developing these skills before the team is allowed its first glimpse into the playbook to learn all the detailed schemes the coaching staff has in mind for them to use in actual games.
- Lawyers argue among themselves the “*ABC’s of Law*” – ethics that must be fully grasped before one can engage another attorney in the courtroom, or understand before one can present his case before judge and jury.

Thinking along these lines is even appropriate when discussing Biblical truths. In fact, this area of study is far more important than cuisine, sports, or law because the consequences of failure are more than just a ruined dish that tastes terrible, a lost game, or a lost court case that may require monetary settlement. The consequences of failing to grasp “*Biblical ABC’s*” could result in a soul spending all eternity in Hell, separated from heaven and the God who dwells there. Making it even more personal...that “lost soul” could be yours, mine, or belonging to someone we dearly love.

The “*ABC’s*” of anything are the most basic of fundamentals. They are foundational truths that are simple to comprehend, yet so important that without them, later principles cannot exist or even be taught. They absolutely must be mastered *first*.

We believe the Bible contains a well-known passage whose context provides the perfect illustration of what we call the “*ABC’s Of Bible Basics*.” The passage is Heb. 5:11 – 6:3. On the pages that follow, please consider the brief exposition that we believe sets forth the context of this passage. Afterwards, please answer the review questions on pages 3-4.

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 1

Exposition of Heb. 5:11 – 6:3

- Many important truths need to be taught, understood, and practiced for one to be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. The author is trying to establish the high priesthood of Jesus Christ...a thought he had previously introduced (cp. 2:17; 4:14-15), and one that had been prophesied from long ago (cp. Psa. 110:4). Establishing this link in the minds of his Jewish readers was necessary...they needed to be reminded not to return to the Aaronic *physical* priesthood of the Law of Moses, and to stay committed to the Messianic *spiritual* priesthood of the gospel of Christ.

The priesthood of Christ was "after the order" or "according to the order" (*in the likeness of*) the priesthood of Melchizedek (5:10). Because he was an Old Testament character, Melchizedek's attributes as both king & priest (cp. Gen. 14) would have to be understood to make the connection to Christ...*"Concerning him (Melchizedek) we have much to say..."* (5:11a). The readers' ability to fully grasp Melchizedek's priesthood would greatly help them understand Christ's priesthood.

- Sadly, sometimes a teacher must reluctantly pause in an important discussion because his readers are not able to understand what is being taught. Such was the case with these Jewish Christians. Regarding his teaching on Melchizedek, the author states "...it is hard to explain since you have become dull of hearing" (5:11b). "Dullness of hearing" is the equivalent to being "sluggish" or spiritually lazy (cp. 6:12) [*same word in the original Greek text*].

Notice also this "condition" was something they had brought on themselves. They had "become" dull of hearing; they weren't born that way, nor did they come in the Lord's kingdom in such a condition. They had stopped listening. Therefore, they had also stopped learning...and stopped growing. It wasn't because what was being taught was too hard. Often, this is the excuse many will give for not even trying in certain Bible classes. Their failure to *want* to learn was the reason why they could not comprehend what was being taught, not because the "curriculum" was too advanced beyond their ability to understand and learn.

- What made this most disappointing and tragic is the author describes people who shouldn't have even been in this dilemma in the first place. He was not addressing "new converts" or those who were still new to the faith. *"For though by this time you ought to be teachers..."* (5:12a). Obviously, enough time had elapsed that they should have been actively teaching others. Yet sadly, they themselves still needed *"...for someone to teach again the elementary (first) principles of the oracles of God..."* (5:12b).

There is nothing wrong with being a "babe in Christ" and "on the bottle of the sincere milk of the word" if one is new to the faith...at some point, all Christians have been "babes" at their new birth (5:12c; cp. 1 Pet. 2:1-3). But that is not the situation faced by the writer of Hebrews.

The cause of their "dullness of hearing" and having to be on a "milk diet" is that they were *"not accustomed to the word of righteousness..."* (5:13). They had failed to behave as an "adult meat eater" in their spiritual growth. The writer describes mature disciples as those *"...who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil"* (5:14).

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 1

If we stop and carefully consider the Hebrews writer's rebuke of these Jewish Christians, we also are made to realize something else...a point that is very appropriate for our present generation. We must not fall into the trap into thinking that length of time as a Christian or "heritage" enjoyed in a family with generations of Christians will cause us to grow from a "spiritual baby" into a "spiritually mature disciple." Judging from the lack of growth and involvement in the work and attendance in a local church, some present-day Christians seem to have this mentality. Maturity in Christ (*the ability to "eat the strong meat"*) will only be accomplished "by reason of use" of a disciple's senses, training them to know good from evil. That is the only way spiritual maturity will come to a saint (cp. 1 Thess. 5:21-22; Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:11; 4:1-4).

- "Elementary teaching" (i.e. "*Biblical ABC's*") must eventually be left behind, and students of the Scripture must "*press on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of...*" those basic principles (6:1-2). Each disciple must grow from childhood to adulthood (cp. Eph 4:11-15). God has made all necessary provisions for this growth to take place. This is what made the situation faced by the readers of the Hebrews epistle all the more sad & tragic. One must eventually be finished with laying a foundation, and finally get around to building the house. All this can be done "...if God permits" (6:3). He does...and we can!!

The answer to such a spiritual dilemma of "dullness of hearing" or "spiritual laziness" is dedicated training of the senses to properly discern good and evil. The lessons planned in these Biblical studies will be aimed at reviewing some of the most fundamental and basic concepts of New Testament Christianity. We're not specifically discussing those "first principles" of how one becomes a Christian (those "steps of salvation"). In fact, we'll not spend much time on those important truths at all. We're going to review the "*ABC's of the gospel.*" We're going to address bedrock principles that are necessary to grasp what the Scripture teaches overall...points of reference New Testament disciples of Christ need to know so that they can "*rightly divide (handle accurately) the word of truth*" (2 Tim. 2:15). Yes, sometimes the Scripture contains "hard" teaching (cp. 2 Pet. 3:16). Peter classified some of Paul's teachings as "hard." That doesn't mean they were "impossible." Surely we are able to tell the difference. Whether it will be hard or easy for each of us to successfully understand these basic principles, it is a "journey" we must be willing to take so that we "...may grow up in all things into Him who is the Head – Christ..." (Eph. 4:15).

Perhaps these Biblical lessons will be nothing more for you than a review. Review is good, even for seasoned saints (cp. 2 Pet. 1:12-15; 3:1-2).

- Experienced Christians should have already mastered these concepts because enough time has elapsed that their senses need to be properly trained to discern good from evil.
- New converts or inexperienced disciples may not be as familiar with these truths. They may even struggle with them somewhat. That is okay...as long as they put forth the effort. With such effort they will be able to lay a lasting foundation and then press on to other topics.

Review Questions On Heb. 5:11 – 6:3

1. In the context of Heb. 5, what must the author begin to do at v. 11? Why was this necessary?

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 1

2. When the author mentions “dull of hearing,” what do you think is meant by this? (cp. 6:12) How is this “condition” further explained in 5:13-14? What is the reason given for the inability of these Christians to being able to understand what the author wanted to present about Melchizedek? (5:14)

3. What “obligation” is mentioned in 5:12? What made this “ought” a fair expectation?

4. Research question: to illustrate the importance of each disciple being able to teach (*the task of teaching is far too important a work to be left to one man – i.e., the preacher*), find other N.T. passages that show the involvement or command of individual Christians engaged in teaching.

5. What must eventually be done with “elementary principles?” (6:1-2) How will this be accomplished? (6:3)

“Except You Be Converted...” (Mt. 18:3)
Understanding Genuine Conversion To Jesus Christ

Introduction

One cannot listen to a sermon on the radio or watch some religious service on television without hearing the preacher at some point discuss “conversion to Jesus Christ.” When talking to people who admit to being “regular church-goers,” they, too, will confess that conversion is essential. However, sometimes we see these same people publicly behaving in such ways that makes us wonder if they have a proper understanding of what “genuine conversion” is all about. Indeed, it is a misunderstood topic – even by New Testament disciples of Christ.

We are not trying to unfairly judge brethren (cp. 2 Tim. 2:19). Yet, the Lord has taught us that we shall know men “by their fruits” (Mt. 7:16). Consequently, when we see or hear Christians either failing to do what is plainly taught in the Scripture or doing something that Jesus has not authorized, it begs the obvious question about whether or not they understand how a “converted person” is to think and act when it comes to religious issues. This particular lesson is devoted to help that understanding.

Defining “Conversion”

The root word is *strepho* and means to “turn around; turn one’s self about; to turn the heart or mind; to change one’s course of conduct” [Thayer, p. 591].

1. Using the following passages, show how the Bible uses this term in a literal or “outward” sense:

Mk. 5:30 _____

Mt. 5:39 _____

Mt. 7:6 _____

2. Now show how the Scripture portrays conversion in a figurative or “inward” sense with the following passages:

Acts 7:39 _____

Acts 15:3 _____

Acts 3:19 _____

Acts 11:21 _____

Mt. 18:3 _____

1 Thess. 1:6-9 _____

Jas. 5:19-20 _____

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 2

3. Thought question: using **Mk. 7:14-23**, how do we know that changed conduct results after one's heart or mind has been changed?

The Need For "Conversion"

4. Using **Mt. 18:3** & **Jas. 5:19-20**, be able to explain how we know conversion (*i.e. "turning to the Lord"*) is not a trivial matter...how it is very essential.

5. What condition among men makes conversion necessary? (**Rom. 6:23**)

6. Using these passages, show how they describe God's character or how He feels about sin:

Prov. 6:16-19 _____

Mal. 2:16 _____

1 Pet. 1:16 _____

1 Jn. 1:5 _____

Rev. 4:8 _____

Isa. 46:8-10 _____

Isa. 59:1-2 _____

7. Based on the above passages alone (*there are many more we could consider*), do we really have to wonder why God calls on us to be "converted" or to "turn around?" (**cp. Gal. 6:7-8**)

8. Some verses in **Eph. 1-2** uses terms that illustrate how God feels toward those who have sinned.
- God has never at any time been under obligation to preserve mankind that has transgressed His will by sinning against Him (**cp. Gen. 6-9**)
 - He would be well within His rights to "wipe us out" (**cp. Ex. 32:7-10**)
 - Instead of "wiping us out," God's word uses expressions that describe how He feels and has reacted toward sinners (those who needed to "turn" or be "converted")

Write down the 2 words or phrases from each verse that describe God's heart toward sinners:

Eph. 2:4 _____ & _____

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 2

Eph. 2:7 _____ & _____

Eph. 1:7 _____ & _____

9. How might 2 Cor. 5:9 summarize on how one might consider his/her conduct in light of whether or not "conversion" has taken place?

Conclusion

Both believers and unbelievers will be challenged with understanding and applying the concept of "conversion" to the Lord.

Unbelievers

They need to be convinced the road they presently travel is in reality a "dead end street" with certain destruction awaiting them (**Eph. 2:1-13**).

- their sinful behavior makes them dead in their sins (**vv. 1-3**)
- they are without Christ, aliens, and without hope in the world (**v. 12**)

They need to be "converted" or "to turn around" and begin living a life that pleases God...one that is in harmony with what is revealed in the Bible.

Believers

Their challenge will not be so much turning to "new sins," but rather overcoming temptations to go back and pick up "old sins."

- they need to live a "transformed" life (**Rom. 12:2**)
- they do not need to make "provisions for the flesh" to satisfy sinful lusts or desires (**Rom. 13:14**)
- they need to "mortify" (kill) works of the flesh (**Col. 3:5**)

They need to remember that in the past they "turned to the Lord" and their present behavior needs to match that commitment and confessed allegiance to Christ.

- in their public obligations of assembling regularly and work in the kingdom
- in their private moments of Bible study and prayer life

Hopefully this lesson has given us a deeper understanding of what "*genuine conversion*" to Jesus Christ really is and what it involves.

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God
Lesson 3

No Greater Name Under Heaven Given Among Men
(A Study Of Unity Based On The Name Of Christ)

Introduction

While we will not take the time to study specific denominational doctrines and how to refute them from the Scripture, we believe it is beneficial to spend some time at least mentioning the history of some of the more mainstream human denominations. We contend that one ought to study truth instead of studying volumes upon volumes of religious error. If one studies and knows truth, he will be able to spot error so as to avoid it himself and teach others to avoid the errors of religion that is not the way of Jesus Christ.

Believers in God and followers of Jesus Christ, by necessity, are going to have to be called something for purposes of identification. Therefore this lesson will, in a very broad sense, contrast the notions that men have created through the centuries with the simple truths revealed in the Bible.

NOTE: On the next couple of pages, you will see we have listed the church of Christ among other churches. Please do not take this to indicate that we believe the Lord's church is "just another church" or equivalent with man-made churches. We simply are comparing the church of Christ (having a *Divine* design) with religious organizations made by men (*human* design).

What name do His followers wear? _____



The church of Christ
Est. 30 A.D. in Jerusalem
Founder: Jesus Christ (Mt. 16:18)

Where is this first found in the New Testament? _____

Do you think it is significant that we do not read of this name earlier in the history of the church, especially prior to **Acts 10**? Why or why not?

Why is this name so meaningful? (cp. Acts 4:12) _____



The Catholic Church
Est. 606 A.D. in Rome
Founder: Boniface III

"Catholic" means universal. Eventually, church elders began extending their authority beyond "the flock among them" (cp. 1 Pet. 5:2). In the 6th century, 5 "patriarchs" (head bishops of Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch, Constantinople, and Rome) were overseeing all the apostate churches. Boniface III (patriarch of Rome) declared himself "Universal Bishop."

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 3



The Lutheran Church
Est. 1530 A.D. in Germany
Founder: Martin Luther & followers

Oldest of "Protestant" churches (*those who protested Catholicism*). Luther was a Catholic priest who grew weary of corrupt practices such as the selling of indulgences and the wicked lifestyles of priests. He sought to reform the Catholic Church, not start another one. However, after the Catholic Church excommunicated him, his followers used his published catechisms to eventually begin the church that now bears his name.



The Presbyterian Church
Est. 1540 A.D. in Switzerland
Founder: John Calvin

Calvin became influenced by Luther's writings, as well as those of an ancient 4th century theologian name Augustine. Given Calvin's desire for strict governance in the churches, his followers eventually adopted the name "Presbyterian" most likely because of **1 Tim. 4:14**, a reference to the presbytery (*eldership*). Entire identity of the church centers around its government. Each "presbytery" contains several churches.



The Protestant Episcopal Church
Est. 1578 A.D. in California
Founder: Francis Drake

This is the American version of the the Church of England, founded by King Henry VIII in 1534. He revolted against the Catholic Church when the pope refused to let him divorce his wife and marry someone else. This began the "state church" of England. The first Anglican service conducted on this continent was led by Francis Drake in 1578. Eventually, this church immigrated through the colonies, almost being destroyed in the American Revolution (*her priests were still loyal to the British crown*). In 1783, it began using its present-day name.



The Baptist Church
Est. 1607 A.D. in England
Founder: John Smyth

Smyth was in the clergy of the Church of England and a member of the English Separatists (*believers in the separation of church and state*). He opposed the Church of England with the King as head of the church. He rejected infant baptism and believed, among other things, solely in immersion; thus, the name "Baptists" began being used by his followers.



The Methodist Church
Est. 1729 A.D. in England
Founders: John & Charles Wesley

Sons of a Church of England clergyman, the Wesleys opposed the rigid, cold, and indifferent conditions of the Church of England. They began meeting with small groups which became increasingly popular. They held to strict methods of study, diet, exercise, etc. Outsiders eventually began calling them the "Methodists."

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 3



The Mormon Church
Est. 1830 A.D. in Utah
Founder: Joseph Smith

In the 1820's, Smith claimed to have received a vision from God, in which he saw Christ along with a prophet named Moroni. Supposedly, he was shown golden plates on which were written God's revelation now known as the Book of Mormon (translated in 1829). All churches were corrupt and the Dark Ages had perverted the gospel. He was to re-establish the true church (comprised of "Latter Day" saints) on the earth.



Jehovah's Witnesses
Est. 1884 A.D. in Pittsburgh
Founder: Charles T. Russell

Russell was an avid reader and preacher who firmly believed in Christ's second coming. This group has made various vain predictions of the Lord's coming through the years. Their organization, *The Watchtower Bible & Tract Society*, controls all their churches and distributes millions of tracts and periodicals annually. They reject Christ as the Son of God and believe in only 1 personage of God - Jehovah the Father.

Other churches and branches off these could be cited, but we have enough to see the basic "religious landscape" in our country. Despite the professed intentions of these man-made churches in their claims of following the Lord, consider this brief history and answer this very important question:

Upon what are all these churches united?

In his epic play *Romeo & Juliet*, William Shakepeare writes in Act 2, Scene 2...
"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet;..."

This might make for good literature, but it does not harmonize with what the Scripture teaches. The Bible says there is something in a name. When people decide to simply call themselves "Christians" they are refusing to wear any other name. No other name under heaven has been given men that is as good as the name of Christ. This is why we should refuse to wear a deonominal name. That is the thrust of **Acts 4:12**. When men wear any other names, they glorify men or doctrines; they do not honor the Son of God who died for them. When men choose to wear man-made names, they will not achieve the unity prayed for by Jesus and encouraged upon all through His word.

Questions

1. Read **Eph. 4:1-6**. Consider along with it **Eph. 1:22-23**, and write below how the man-made churches listed in this lesson fail to properly carry out what these verses teach.

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 3

2. Read **Eph. 3:10-11**. What is the church supposed to do? Those who belong to man-made churches state that all churches make up the “universal” church spoken of in **v. 10**. If, for the sake of argument, we grant that notion, what obvious problem exists in complying with this passage?

3. Read **Eph. 4:11-16**. What did God hope to accomplish through what He gave? (**vv. 12-13, 16**) What did He hope to prevent? (**v. 14**) How do the multiplicity of churches (*the ones listed in this lesson*) affect what this passage teaches?

4. Read the Lord's prayer in **Jn. 17:20-21**. Beginning in **v. 20**, for whom is He praying and what is His request? Again, thinking about the man-made churches discussed in this lesson, how do they correspond to the desires Jesus states in this section of His prayer?

5. Read **1 Cor. 1:10-13**. How might we use this passage in thinking about and discussing the existence of so many man-made churches?

6. Read **Gal. 1:6-9, 11-12**. What do these verses say about teaching a “different gospel” other than what Paul received from God and taught? How serious does the apostle say teaching something different would be?

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 4

The Bible: God's Only Word

Introduction

The Bible is, and always will be, the most popular “best-seller” of all time. It is the most famous talked about book on the market, being translated into more languages than any other book. Given these facts, one would think the vast majority of its readers would have a deep, reverential respect for it. Yet, we know that not to be the case. In fact, no other book may be more disrespected than the Bible. People won't say as much with their words, but by the way they live their lives and worship according to their own choices, they show a lack of respect for “the world's most popular book.”

The Bible is not just a book we display on coffee tables or bookshelves so others can see we own one. How one views the Bible determines what he is morally, socially...especially religiously. This view also will dictate where he will spend eternity. Man must realize *the only way to know what God wants us to do is for Him to tell us* (*I don't know of anyone claiming the ability to read God's mind*). Some claim God still speaks through visions and dreams. Others continue to claim that God speaks directly to their heart. The truth remains...God must tell us His will. The difference is in how He tells us.

The theme of this lesson is to show the Bible to be God's only word, and thus is authoritative. It has no equal. It has had no predecessor. It will have no successor. If we accept the idea the Bible stands alone as God's only word, and we “hide it in our hearts” (**Psa. 119:11**), then we have taken a huge step towards a proper understanding and application of the Bible.

The Source Of The Bible

Before any discussion can begin, all must agree that the Bible comes from God.

Man's quest => find God's book that will instruct him on proper behavior so that he can go to heaven

- Two ways to accomplish this:

- a) Read every book ever written; eliminate all frauds one by one
 - such a process is physically impossible
 - God has warned us against such thinking (**Eccl. 12:11-12**)

b) Find the one book that satisfies all demands for Divine authenticity; reject all others



The Bible claims to be that book

How do the passages below suggest such a claim?

Jer. 1:9 _____

1 Thess. 2:13 _____

2 Tim. 3:16-17 _____

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 4

The Nature Of The Bible

Its Harmony & Unity

- Not 1 book, but 66 different books blended together
- Written by 40 different human penmen over a period of 1,500 years
- These penmen came from different time periods and cultures, socio-economic backgrounds, and they spoke different languages
- Yet, the Bible is completely harmonious

What could be the only explanation? (2 Pet. 1:19-21)

Its Fulfilled Prophecies

- Prophecies written in the Old Testament hundreds of years in advance of being fulfilled bears strong evidence that the Bible is God's only book
- Examples:
 - a) Release of Jews from captivity by Persian king Cyrus (Isa. 44:28)
Written by Isaiah 170 years before Cyrus was born => How?
 - b) Birth of the Messiah to a virgin in Bethlehem (Isa. 7:14; Mic. 5:1-5)
Written by these prophets 700 years before Christ's birth => How?

Its Scientific & Historic Accuracies

- Though not a science or history book, the Bible does contain scientific & historical information
- Such discoveries continue to validate or confirm the accuracy, and credibility, of the Bible
- Examples:
 - a) World-wide paradigm that the world was flat
Disproved by Magellan in 1519
What does Isa. 40:22 & Prov. 8:27 say about this? _____
 - b) The absence of stars or planets when gazing directly north into the universe
Billions of heavenly stars when looking south, east, or west
What does Job 26:7 say about this? _____
 - c) The discovery of gravity by Sir Isaac Newton ca. 1664
What does Job 26:7 say about this? _____
 - d) British Museum expedition in 1929 confirmed a world-wide flood
Where does the Bible record this? _____
 - e) Basic dimensions of ship building [still used today]
Where does the Bible record this? _____
 - f) Basic oceanographic lanes [still traveled by ships today]
What does Psa. 8:8 say about this? _____

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 4

The Inerrancy Of The Bible

Define "inerrancy." _____

This connects the very nature of God Himself with the nature of His word

- a) What do we know about God's character? (**Num. 23:19; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18**)
- b) What do we know about the source of Scripture? (**2 Tim. 3:16-17**)
- c) Therefore, what is the inescapable conclusion regarding the nature of God's word?

The Durability Of The Bible

One of the Bible's most salient features is its indestructibility. Quite probably no other book ever written has had to endure as many determined attacks to destroy it as has the Bible.

- the fact that the Scripture has survived this long testifies of its origin
 - the Old Testament is at least 3,500 years old
 - the New Testament is nearly 2,000 years old
- most books do not even survive 1 or 2 generations

Some previous attempts to destroy the Bible:

- King Jehoiakim of Judah (**Jer. 36:4-6, 20-24, 27-28**)
- Antiochus Epiphanes of the Seleucid dynasty (175 - 163 B.C.)
- Diocletian, Roman emperor (303 A.D.)
- Roman Catholic Pope Innocent III (1199 A.D.)
- Roman Catholic Pope Gregory IX (1234 A.D.)

Despite these and other attempts, what does **Mt. 24:35** and **1 Pet. 1:23-25** teach us?

Other Books Besides The Bible

Even though sufficient proof exists that the Bible is God's only book, other books have arisen and their claims need to be dispelled.

The Book of Mormon

- it contradicts the Bible
 - 3 days of darkness at the crucifixion (Helaman 14:20-27)
 - the Bible records only 3 hours of darkness (**Lk. 23:44**)
- it has numerous contradictions
 - Alma 46:13-16 => supposedly written about 70 B.C.
 - Mosiah 18:17 => supposedly written about 150 B.C.



references to Christians
and the church of Christ

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 4

- it fails the test of fulfilled prophecy
 - Alma 7:10 => predicted that Christ would be born in Jerusalem
 - the Bible correctly prophesied Jesus' birth in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2; Lk. 2:4)
- it fails the test of scientific accuracy
 - 1 Nephi 18:12 => references the Nephites using a compass
 - they supposedly lived around 550 B.C.
 - the compass was not invented until around 1100 A.D.

The Koran

- it contradicts the Bible
 - claims one of Noah's sons died in the flood (11:42-43)
 - the Bible clearly teaches all 3 sons survived in the ark (Gen. 7:1-5)
 - claims Jesus was not crucified at all (4:157-159)
 - the Bible clearly teaches He was (Lk. 23:33)

Watchtower Publications

- they contradict the Bible
 - claim that the doctrine of a "Trinity" is false => there is only one God, the Father
[*"Should You Believe In The Trinity?" Watchtower Publication, pg. 31*]
 - the Bible clearly teaches the existence of 1 Godhead with 3 members being God (Gen. 1:1-2, 26; Jn. 1:1-4; 8:24, 58; Acts 5:3-4; Rom. 1:20; Col. 2:9)
- they fail the test of fulfilled prophecy
 - claimed "the present war in Europe (World War 1) is the beginning of the Armageddon of the Scriptures." [Pastor Russell Sermons, 1914 pg. 676]

Conclusion

The Bible is what it claims to be...the only written book of God!! We don't need to look any further for another authoritative source.

- ◆ It contains all the truth that God wants us to have
- ◆ It needs no revision or updating; it is totally inerrant
- ◆ It is all sufficient; it lacks nothing man needs to serve God (2 Pet. 1:3)
- ◆ It is far superior to anything man can ever invent (Isa. 55:8-11)
 - "if it is new, it is not true"
 - "if it is true, it is not new"
 - if a man-made creed contains more than the Bible, it contains too much
 - if a man-made creed contains less than the Bible, it contains too little
 - if a man-made creed contains the same as the Bible, there is no need for it
- ◆ It will be the standard used for our judgment (Jn. 12:48; Rev. 20:11-15)
- ◆ We should revere it, study it, believe it, and at last obey it

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 4

Questions

1. What does **Jude 3** teach us about the Bible being God's only word?
2. From the prophecies of Jeremiah, of what are we reminded about our need for the word of God? (**Jer. 10:23**) When faced with dilemmas, where should we turn? (**Jer. 6:16**)
3. How does the apostle Paul illustrate the importance of Christians recognizing what he preached as God's only word in **Gal. 1:6-9**? With what extreme does he illustrate his argument?
4. How does the "prophetic test" God gave to Israel in **Deut. 18:14-22** prove that God wanted His people to view His word to them as exclusive?
5. What failure of David's is chronicled in **2 Sam. 6:1-11**? What was the mistake he made? (**1 Chron. 15:1-15**) Where was this "due order" or "ordinance" of God? (**Ex. 25:10-15; Num. 4:5, 15**)
6. Using the passage from **2 Sam. 6**, what practical lessons can we learn from David's error?

The Difference Between The Old & New Covenants

Introduction

Having established the Bible as God's only book, we next examine an important distinction about the Bible itself: *the Bible has two different covenants*. Defined, a "covenant" is "*an agreement between persons or parties*" (*Webster's*). There may be no greater contributor to the lack of respect for Biblical authority among religious people than in the failure to recognize, understand, and apply this difference in how God has dealt with His people through the ages based on 2 different covenants.

Many erroneous religious practices that exist among good people result from a failure to understand the difference in the Old and the New Covenants. Even among brethren there has arisen a movement that denies the difference between the two covenants. Many brethren teach that the Old Testament never ended...the New Testament is simply a "continuation." This is clearly not Biblical because the Scripture refers to these covenants as the "*first*" and "*second*" ones (**Heb. 8:7**), and as the "*old*" and "*new*" ones (**Heb. 8:13**).

Those who contend for this difference between the covenants of the Scripture are often misunderstood as believing the Old Testament is not important at all. They have been misrepresented as saying all we should use is the New Testament. Just because the Old Testament is not our source of authority does not equate to saying it should be removed from the Bible altogether. In fact, until one learns the Old Testament, the New Testament makes little sense at all. The Old Testament is important because...

- ◆ ...the apostle Paul said as much (**Rom. 7:6-13**)
 - it makes us aware of sin, our need for mercy & forgiveness
- ◆ ...it contains valuable lessons for servants of God today (**Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:1-11**)
 - if Christians commit similar sins as did Israel, we also will be punished (**cp. Heb. 2:1-3**)

The Old Covenant

- ◆ *Its Origin, Confirmation, & Violation*
 - God desired a covenant with a people He considered His own (**Ex. 3:7,10; 19:4-6**)
 - What were the conditions of this covenant?

 - For whom was this covenant? (**Deut. 5:2-4**)

 - God recorded this covenant in a book (**Ex. 24:3-7**)
 - How was it confirmed? (**Heb. 9:18-21**)

 - Israel later violated the covenant (**Jer. 31:32**)
 - How did Israel break the covenant? (**Heb. 8:9**)

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 5

- ◆ *Its Purpose*
 - To be a national & religious law for Israel
 - Mandated proper civil & moral treatment of fellow man (Ex. 21-23)
 - Regulated proper worship of Jehovah (Ex. 25-31)
 - To make transgressions, sin evident (Rom. 7:5-11; Gal. 3:19)
 - What is personified as our “real” enemy?
 - To bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:24)
 - What should result from our being brought to Christ?

- ◆ *Its Forecast Of The New Covenant*
 - The first covenant was given around 1445 B.C.
 - Almost 900 years later, God said He would make another one (Jer. 31:31-34)
 - The old covenant served as our a “schoolmaster” or “tutor” (Gal. 3:19-25)
 - Tutor => *paidagōgos* (a child conductor, not instructor)
 - Responsibility was to lead the child to the one who would teach
 - How does Timothy illustrate this? (2 Tim. 3:15)

The New Covenant

- ◆ *Its Origin*
 - Though the old covenant pointed to the coming of the Seed, the new covenant did not begin at His coming (Gal. 3:19)
 - Which covenant did Jesus keep, fulfill? (Mt. 5:17-18)
 - When was the old covenant fulfilled, satisfied? (Col. 2:14)
 - Exactly when did the new covenant begin to be in force? (Acts 1-2)

- ◆ *Its Relation To The Old Covenant*
 - Of the original 10 Commandments (Decalogue), how many are repeated in the new covenant, either verbatim or in principle?
 - What do these repetitions suggest about God and morality?
 - What is the subject matter in the one difference between the new covenant and the Decalogue of the old covenant?

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 6

“By What Authority Do You Do These Things?” (Mt. 21:23) — Understanding Preliminary Concepts On Biblical Authority —

Why Study Biblical Authority?

In some realms of life, it is not necessary to discuss authority to be successful.

- **Politics.** Under our form of government, we have competing parties that have equal access and protection under law. If one doesn't like the party he is affiliated with, he can join another one. Additionally, there are other forms of rule besides ours. All are appointed by God and are therefore legitimate in His sight. If one doesn't like living under a monarchy, he can move to a country that is ruled as a republic, and vice versa. One alternative is as good as another.
- **Economics.** Different theories abound in this realm. Given the economy is always fluctuating, it is necessary that we be able to adapt to changes in marketplaces by changing our strategies, sometimes at a moment's notice. So, in a broad sense, all economic theories are viable and, therefore, important.

However, there is every reason to discuss authority in the realm of **religion**. In this realm, man has no say absolutely at all. ***God has it all*** (Mt. 28:18). This is why it is vital to study Biblical authority. Religion is the ***only*** realm that carries eternal consequences. If you pick the wrong political party or theory of economics, so what? If you violate the authority of God, you stand to lose your soul for all of eternity.

Anytime a departure occurs from God's "pattern," ***sin has been committed***. The subject matter can be:

- what we must do to gain salvation (*man's **most** important need*)
- the identity, organization, work of the church
- any other activity done in the name of religion

If what results from human efforts is not like the "pattern" revealed in the Scripture (cp. Heb. 8:5), it will not be pleasing to God...even if those involved approve of what has been done.

This is especially important for young Christians to understand. Every issue that has divided the Lord's people has been fought over the basic principle of Biblical authority. Young Christians today were not around when those battles were fought ages ago. Through no fault of their own, they will not be as able to make proper applications as will older saints. Therefore, it is needful that this subject be thoroughly taught to every generation. It is important that every disciple of Christ always have a good understanding of Biblical authority. It is necessary for the following reasons:

- ◆ Man cannot direct himself eternally (Jer. 10:23; Prov. 20:24)
- ◆ The Lord Jesus cautions against acting without His authority (Mt. 7:21-23)
- ◆ Brethren in the 1st century abused Biblical authority (Acts 15)
- ◆ Brethren in our day have abused Biblical authority (**Liberalism**)
- ◆ Brethren in the future will abuse Biblical authority over some yet-to-be determined issue

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 6

The Importance Of Biblical Authority

Having a solid understanding on Biblical authority is important for 2 main reasons.

- 1) *Knowing how to define, understand, and properly apply Biblical authority allows one to be well-equipped in dealing with unbelievers, or with brethren who want to take the Lord's church with them down the road of apostasy.*

If one does not understand Biblical authority, he is like the one described in **Eph. 4:14**, a child who will be "tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;..." No matter what the issue is, it is to be decided by the "pattern" God left us, the Scripture. If we do not understand the principles of Biblical authority as it pertains to the issue, we will not be able to defend God's "pattern" and are likely to be swept away ourselves in the apostasy.

- 2) *Knowing how to define, understand, and properly apply Biblical authority allows the people of God to retain their distinctiveness in a world full of sin, and to serve God in work and worship in the way He has ordained.*

Jesus Himself prayed that His disciples would not become like the world (**Jn. 17:14-17**). The apostle Paul instructed saints to not conform their thinking to worldly standards, but to make up their minds to serve God according to the gospel (**Rom. 12:1-2**). God has *always* told His people that they were going to be different than everybody else (**Ex. 19:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:9-10**). In order to please God in this way, we must understand the principles of Biblical authority. It is hypocrisy to address Jesus as "Lord" when we don't follow the "pattern" (**Lk. 6:46**).

To illustrate this, consider the following survey conducted among institutional churches of Christ:

Surveyors: Mr. Robert Oglesby, Jr. and Mr. Carley Dodd

Sponsor: Abilene Christian University

Population: 530 teens, ages 11-19 who attend churches of Christ

- ◆ 16% think there is little difference between the church of Christ & denominations
- ◆ 90% think instrumental music is acceptable in worship
- ◆ 69% believe Christians can dress, talk, etc. like the world
- ◆ 69% believe church membership doesn't matter as long as you love God

Do we think that just because we are of the "conservative," non-institutional church of Christ that we are immune from such a mindset that threatens our existence as God's distinct people? This is why it is imperative we know the "old paths, where the good way is" (**Jer. 6:16; 2 Pet. 3:1-2**). This is why our young people need to be constantly exposed to plain Bible teaching so that when they face issues that will threaten the Lord's body, they'll know the "pattern."

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 6

The Need For Biblical Authority

Imagine a world without any authority. The only group that would be happy about such an arrangement would be the criminals. Everyone else would suffer. As a general rule, men and women everywhere recognize the need for authority:

- ◆ Society depends on authority vested in law enforcement
- ◆ Commerce has had authority of standards, weights and measures since Bible days
- ◆ Communication would grind to a halt without authority of language and the meaning of words
- ◆ Everyday interaction among humans would cease without authority of keeping time

The alternative in a world without authority is chaos.

Biblically, the most confusing time may have been the period of The Judges. For some 350 years, anarchy reigned in Israel because "...every man did what was right in his own eyes" (**Judg. 17:6**). For this reason, not only was there no spiritual progress, there was only decline and decay. From the depths of this God would use the strength of a united kingdom in which His law was to be respected and obeyed (**1 Sam. 12:14-15; 1 Kings 2:3-4**).

In our day, religious "anarchy" is equally confusing. A sincere searcher for truth is perplexed because of all the available "choices" [*material on pages 8-10.*] All are advertised as viable; "one is as good as another." Desiring fellowship with God, he will have to know in which direction to turn to find the truth that will set him free (**Jn. 8:31-32**). Without finally considering the subject of Biblical authority, he is doomed to failure. The division and confusion in religion is directly attributable to the failure among churches with conflicting doctrines to adhere to a single standard of authority. The prevailing motto is, "It doesn't matter what you believe or practice, as long as you're sincere. You believe what you want to, and I'll believe what I want to." The result is anything but what the Lord prayed for and desires (**Jn. 17:17-21**).

Not only is there a necessity for authority in *collective* activity, authority is also needed in *individual* accountability. The Bible is equally accessible to all. If it wasn't, God would have no basis for holding all of humanity individually accountable to what was not universally available. Therefore, even if everyone else is doing wrong, I am still authorized to do right, and I must still submit to the authority of the Scripture (**cp. Mt. 25:14-30; esp. v. 23; 2 Cor. 13:5; Rev. 3:4**).

Clearly, the need for authority in religion should be obvious to all.

Questions

1. What is the relevant question found in **Mt. 21:23-27**? How does it properly identify our choices?
2. In this same episode, how did the Jews show they also recognized authority in religion? (**v. 25b**)

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 6

3. What does the incident involving Nadab & Abihu teach us about authority? (Lev. 10:1-2)

4. From 2 Chron. 26:16-20, besides doing the right thing, what else does authority teach us? (cp. Ex. 30:7)

5. What does the statement from the apostles in Acts 15:24 suggest about authority? What does it say about the apostles, and also those who were teaching contrary to them?

6. In Jer. 2:13, God compares His will to what man often uses as a substitute. What did Jehovah label that for which the people had forsaken Him? What comparison do you think is being made?

7. Comment below on some of the "broken cisterns" used as authority in religion in lieu of the Bible. Try to use a Bible passage that will illustrate your answer(s).

Parents _____

Conscience _____

Human wisdom _____

Preachers _____

Feelings _____

Human creeds _____

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 6

The Authority Of Christ & The Apostles

Our appeal should *not* just be made to the authority of the New Testament. Rather, we should appeal to the authority of Jesus Christ. Without Christ, the Bible is meaningless. By what He did, Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament. By who He is, Christ made possible the New Testament which tells us about Him.

As an extension of Himself, Jesus hand-chose and sent out certain men ("apostles") to carry on His work after His departure. Saying the apostles had "authority" doesn't deify them; it simply recognizes the special role into which the Lord placed them. When one "receives" the words of an apostle, he is, in fact, listening to Christ and to the Father who sent Him into the world (cp. Lk. 10:16; Jn. 13:20). When one faithfully abides by and teaches what the apostles taught, he teaches what Jesus Christ taught (cp. Mt. 28:20). Their teachings are inseparable. They are identical in nature. Therefore, we understand the authority of Jesus Christ to be *inherent*...the authority of His apostles is *delegated*.

The Authority of Jesus Christ

When wrestling with any religious issue, our final appeal must be to Christ. In all reality, His word is the "final word" (cp. Heb. 1:1-2). Establishing the authority of Jesus goes a long way towards establishing the authority of the New Testament. Notice the different ways in which Jesus expressed His authority:

- ♦ by the claims He made about Himself
 - He claimed to have been sent by the Father (Jn. 7:16-17; 12:48-50; 14:23-24)
 - who is He according to Heb. 3:1?

- ♦ by the claims He made about man's destiny
 - how we treat Him determines our eternal future (Lk. 12:8-9)
 - how are we described based on our reaction to His words? (Mt. 7:24, 26)

- ♦ by the authority inherent in His works
 - these works bore witness that He had been sent by God (Jn. 5:36)
 - what could Jesus do? (Mt. 9:1-8)

 - what did Jesus ask His disciples to do in Jn. 14:10-11?

 - for what purpose were the works of Jesus recorded? (Jn. 20:30-31)

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 6

- d. Jn. 20:23

- 6. When the early church began, what distinguished their activities in teaching and preaching the gospel? (**Acts 2:42a**) Where did the apostles get this doctrine? (**Mt. 28:20**)

- 7. How authoritative was what Paul preached to the Galatians? (**Gal. 1:6-9**)

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 7

“By What Authority Do You Do These Things?” (Mt. 21:23) — Defining & Establishing New Testament Authority —

Defining New Testament Authority

Having covered the “underlying principles” relating to Biblical authority, let’s now apply what we have learned. This is putting Biblical knowledge and understanding into practice in everyday situations, both *in* and *out* of the public assembly.

One more time, let’s review what we have established thus far:

- ◆ The Bible is God’s *only* revealed word and our pattern for all we are to do religiously. All other “sources” come from the minds of men, and are to be rejected.
- ◆ The Bible contains 2 different covenants. The 1st one was for O.T. Israel while the 2nd one is for us today. The 2nd covenant is superior to the 1st covenant.
- ◆ The New Covenant, or Testament, contains the *inherent* authority of Jesus Christ and the *delegated* authority of His chosen apostles. To follow the apostles is to follow Christ and the Father. To reject them is to reject Christ and the Father.
- ◆ We have a definite need for authority in all realms of life. Without authority, especially in our relationship with God and others, life would be one big chaotic mess.

Grasping how authority is defined in the New Testament is necessary before one can truly understand how the 2nd Covenant (*the New Testament*) directs us in everyday living. This requires knowing the difference between *general* New Testament authority and *specific* New Testament authority. It also means we must have an understanding of expediencies.

General Authority vs. Specific Authority

Those in various realms of authority (civil rulers, teachers, employers, etc.) do not always express their right to command or direct in the same way. This is not shocking to us; we’ve learned to understand how to recognize and respond to the different ways these authoritative figures reveal their intentions for us. Similarly, the authority of the New Testament is not defined always in the same way. Sometimes we read of something authorized in a *general* sense. On other occasions, we notice it to be more *specified*. Until we recognize this difference, we cannot properly establish New Testament authority for anything we may want or need to do religiously. This is important because of passages like **Mt. 7:21-23**.

This concept can be seen from the Old Testament as well. While we will use a couple of examples, we will primarily focus on how the New Testament portrays the difference. Using a regular English dictionary, define the following:

General _____

Specific _____

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 7

The law which governs this concept of general and specific authority is the *law of exclusion*. Admittedly, this is a human term; it is not found in the Scripture. Its premise is that the statement or command to do one thing authorizes only the doing of the thing specified. That necessarily means the doing of other things is automatically forbidden, or “excluded.”

To illustrate this, notice the following common secular examples. In the space provided, list what is specified and what is excluded by the law of exclusion.

- ◆ A last will & testament _____

- ◆ A property deed _____

- ◆ A physician's prescription _____

Expediencies

An expedient is a suitable, profitable, or advantageous way to accomplish an end. Anything necessary which can be used to comply with a command, as long as it is *not* prohibited somewhere else in the Scripture, can be labeled an expedient, and thus be used in carrying out a command of God.

Only those things which are lawful are expedient. Expediencies *always* fall into the category of general authority. Specified authority allows no room for expediencies because everything is specified.

Any means or methods that are not generally authorized are not expediencies; they are *substitutions* for what God has commanded. Sometimes what is claimed as an expedient is actually a substitution.

The place in the Scripture that deals with expediencies is **1 Cor. 10:23-33**. Read this text carefully a few times and answer the following questions:

1. What is the context? _____
2. What must something be before it can be an expedient? (v. 23) _____
3. What must the expedient always do? (vv. 23b-24, 33; cp. 14:26b) _____
4. What must the expedient never do? (v. 32; cp. 8:7-13) _____

When the issues of institutionalism were plaguing the church 50 to 60 years ago, some brethren sought to justify sinful practices by the so-called “rule of expediency.” The basic tenet of this “law” was that if something worked, it was expedient. Read the lengthy quote on the following page very carefully.

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 7

Notice the following quotes from Foy E. Wallace, Jr. during the debates over institutionalism:

Somewhat has been said of a New Testament law of expediency. Where is any such law found in the New Testament? Expediency is not a law. "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient," is the way it reads in **1 Cor. 10:23 [ASV]**. Of course, Paul was not making the blanket affirmation that everything is lawful (see **1 Cor. 6:9-10**). Obviously, it means only the things that are lawful can be expedient; but some things that are lawful are not expedient. Therefore to prove that anything is expedient, it must first be proven to be lawful. The brethren are in reverse, attempting to prove that a thing is lawful by trying to prove that it is expedient, which is an inversion of the New Testament principle. Nothing is expedient that is not lawful.

Now when authority is wanted for a practice for which no authority exists – presto! The "**law of expediency**" is invoked! If it can be called a law at all, it is a human law altogether, it is not divine. Take these examples:

Assembling is authorized => the meeting house is the expedient

Giving is authorized => the collection basket is the expedient

Baptism is authorized => the baptistery is the expedient

Singing is authorized => the song books are the expedients

Collection baskets could not be expedient if there were no law on giving. A baptistery could not be expedient if there was no command for baptism.

On the same principle, the employment of mechanized music in the church not being authorized, instruments of music are not expedients, and cannot be paralleled with song books. Mechanical music is not authorized; therefore, instruments for that kind of music cannot be classed with expedients.

Before arguing the "law of expediency" for putting colleges in the budgets of the churches, let the authority be cited for the church to support human institutions. If such can be shown to be lawful, then it will be time enough to discuss whether it is expedient or not.

The once famous Henry Ward Beecher said, "Infant baptism is like an ox yoke... it works." So, it is argued that a thing is expedient if it works...The whole institutional proposition has been predicated on a law that does not exist – the so-called but non-existent "New Testament Law of Expediency."

Torch (August, 1950, pp. 8-11)

Questions

Using the charts on the following pages, complete the examples that illustrate general and specific authority, expediencies, and the law of exclusion.

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God
Lesson 7

GENERAL AUTHORITY	
The General Command	Expediencies That Are Allowed
<p><u>Noah</u> "Make an ark..." (Gen. 6:14)</p>	
<p><u>The Red Heifer</u> "Bring a red heifer..." (Num. 19:2-10)</p>	
<p><u>The Great Commission</u> "Go..." (Mt. 28:19)</p> <p>"Baptize..." (Mt. 28:19)</p> <p>"Teach..." (Mt. 28:20)</p>	
<p><u>Assembling</u> "...not forsaking the assembling..." (Heb. 10:25)</p>	
<p><u>The Lord's Supper</u> "...first day of the week..." (Acts 20:7)</p> <p>"take this...cup..." (Mt. 26:27-29; Lk. 22:17)</p>	
<p><u>Benevolence</u> "...relieve...widows indeed." (1 Tim. 5:16) "...visit orphans and widows..." (Jas. 1:27)</p>	

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God
Lesson 7

SPECIFIC AUTHORITY	
The Specific Command	Substitutions Not Allowed (Not Expediencies)
<p><u>The Passover Lamb</u> "On the 10th day of the month, take a lamb for yourselves..." (Ex. 12:2-5)</p>	
<p><u>Abraham & Isaac</u> "Offer him...as a burnt offering..." (Gen. 22:2)</p>	
<p><u>The Worship of the Church</u> Preaching (Mk. 16:15) Giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2) Prayer (Acts 2:42) Singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) The Lord's Supper (Mk. 14:12-25; Acts 20:7)</p>	
<p><u>Baptism</u> "...buried with Him through baptism" (Rom. 6:4) "Can anyone forbid water..." (Acts 10:47)</p>	
<p><u>The Way of Salvation</u> Belief (Heb. 11:6; Rom. 10:13-14; Mk. 16:16) Repentance (Lk. 13:3,5; Acts 2:38; 17:30) Confession (Mt. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:9-10) Baptism (Rom. 6:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:21) Faithfulness (Rev. 2:10)</p>	
<p><u>Collective Activity</u> A local congregation (Acts 11:27-30; 14:23; 20:28; Phil. 1:1)</p>	

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 7

Establishing New Testament Authority

The New Testament defines the authority that guides us. Either it is expressed *generally* (allowing for the use of expediencies to accomplish our compliance), or it is expressed *specifically* (where the law of exclusion automatically excludes everything else that is not specified).

Now it is time to see how the New Testament establishes authority that is expressed either generally or specifically. It is in this lesson that we will learn exactly how heaven's will is articulated. If all are going to agree to be bound by this New Covenant which contains the inherent authority of Jesus Christ and the delegated authority of His apostles, then all are going to have to know how the New Testament teaches or guides us.

When we talk about the New Testament teaching or guiding us, we refer to how the authority contained in the New Testament is established. It is established in 3 different, yet equal ways:

- ◆ *By a command or precept*
A direct statement from God that can be either positive or negative. It either commands the doing of something or prohibits the doing of something.
- ◆ *By an approved example*
Action(s) of 1st century believers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit-led apostles of Jesus. Such actions are deemed "approved" because upon our examination of them, we can see they met with the Lord's approval, and were therefore authorized. However, not every example found in the New Testament is authoritative in nature.
- ◆ *By a necessary inference*
An inescapable conclusion one reaches when considering a given context. The inference is neither expressly stated nor specifically illustrated, but it is necessarily implied by the clear import and meaning of the passage in context.

A word of caution is in order...

We must be careful not to elevate this "approach" of command, approved example, and necessary inference above where it should be. Sometimes brethren quote these 3 methods as if they were equal to "Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John." They are only methods to employ in understanding the Bible; they are not actual words from heaven!!

The first consideration in establishing New Testament authority is God Himself!! Without God, His nature, character, and holiness, all the commands, examples, and inferences we could collectively stack on top of one another would be absolutely meaningless.

Because of Who God is, and because of what God expects of us, that is why we must have respect for His word, be able to establish authority for all we teach and practice. We must also do it the only ways the New Testament reveals. Those methods are...

- 1) **Divine commands**; 2) **Approved examples**; and 3) **Necessary inferences**.

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 7

This section of the lesson will have 3 parts:

- a) We will learn how each of the above methods are illustrated in the Scripture.
- b) We will apply all 3 methods to one Biblical issue => the Lord's Supper.
- c) We will show that Christians in the 1st century used these 3 methods to settle divisive issues that confronted and troubled them.

Establishing Authority Using Each Method

◆ Direct Commands

- what was commanded in **Gen. 12:1**? _____
- what is commanded in **Acts 2:38**? _____
- what was prohibited in **Ex. 20:13**? _____
- what is prohibited in **Eph. 4:29**? _____

Compare the one who would show respect for these Divine precepts with the one Jesus described in **Mt. 15:8-9**. What is the obvious difference?

◆ Approved Examples

- what example is recorded in **Acts 20:7**? _____
- what example is recorded in **Acts 25:10-11**? _____

There are some, even among the Lord's church today, who say that examples found in the New Testament are not binding. Such thinking is without understanding. However, not every example found in the New Testament is binding. We must be able to make the distinction.

The ability to determine whether or not an example is authoritative, and therefore binding, rests on whether or not the example itself is incidental or essential. If it is incidental to the doing of something, it is **not** binding and authoritative. If it is essential to the doing of something, it is binding and authoritative.

- *The command to "go preach the gospel" (Mk. 16:15)*
 - how did Paul go? (**Acts 13:4-5**) _____
 - how did Philip go? (**Acts 8:29-35**) _____
 - how did Peter go? (**Acts 10:23-24, 33-43**) => trip ~ 35 miles _____
- *The command to care for brethren in need (1 Jn. 3:16-18)*
 - what did some believers do? (**Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-37**) _____
 - what did other believers do? (**1 Tim. 6:17-18**) _____

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 7

- *The number of overseers in a local church (Acts 14:23)*
 - how was their appointment accomplished? (Titus 1:5) _____
 - how do we know ***how many*** ought to be in each church?

- *Who may be helped from the Lord's treasury (1 Tim 5:16)*
 - how may we know ***who*** may be helped? (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35; 6:1-6; 11:27-30; Rom. 15:25-31; 1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1, 12-13)

◆ Necessary Inferences

- what is inferred in 1 Cor. 16:1-2? _____
- what is inferred in Acts 8:35-37? _____

Not all inferences are necessary. Therefore, we must watch what we label "necessary."

- What is necessarily inferred in Heb. 10:25? _____
- What is not necessarily inferred? _____

All 3 Methods Applied To One Biblical Issue

No single command gives all the details regarding our observance of the Lord's Supper on the first day of every week. Therefore, we must study everything revealed on this topic to ensure that we have all the truth, and that we are complying with God's demands (cp. Psa. 119:160).

- what aspect of the Supper is authorized by command? (Mt. 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 11:23-25)
- what aspect of the Supper is authorized by example? (Acts 20:7)
- what aspect of the Supper is authorized by a necessary conclusion? (Acts 20:7)
 - compare to Ex. 20:8
 - if observance was to be yearly, what was specified? (Lev. 23:27)
 - if observance was to be monthly, what was specified? (Num. 10:10)
 - if observance was to be weekly, what was specified?

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 7

All 3 Methods Used By Early Christians To Settle Controversies

It is also encouraging to note that the 1st century Christians undertook the task of deciding authority on given issues as we do today. That alone tells us that truth is the same today as it was when the kingdom began. It also emphasizes that we can be what the early believers were (simply Christians) when we do what they did (Bible things in Bible ways).

The controversy over whether or not Gentile Christians should be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses troubled the early church. Judaizing teachers roamed all over the ancient world, following the Lord's apostles around in attempts to circumvent the plain teaching the gospel. It finally reached a decisive point when Gentile converts were "troubled" and their souls were "unsettled" (**Acts 15:24**). This was an issue that had to be settled. The Christians had to understand the authority of heaven. How they went about establishing it is exactly the focus of this lesson. In deciding the issue, the apostles and elders made their appeal to this same three-fold rule of command, example, and necessary inference.

The text »»» Acts 15

The issue »»» The necessity of Gentile Christians keeping the Law of Moses (circumcision)?

The solution »»» Establishing authority

Authority was established by an approved example (vv. 7-11)

- Peter shows how the Lord sent him to the uncircumcised Gentiles
 - what does Peter mention? (vv. 8-9)
- of what was all this an example?

Authority was established by a necessary inference or conclusion (v. 12)

- Paul & Barnabas show how God used them among the Gentiles
 - what do Paul & Barnabas mention?
- what is the only conclusion one can come to?

Authority was established by a direct command from God (vv. 13-19)

- James reminds the brethren what God had already stated about the salvation of the Gentiles
 - who does James quote? (vv. 16-17)
- because of what God said, what shouldn't be done to the Gentiles? (v. 19)

What 2 very important things were accomplished with this 3-fold approach?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 8

“The Secret Things Belong To God...” (Deut. 29:29) Respecting The Silence Of The Scripture

Even after learning how to define and establish New Testament authority, one final lesson must still be examined to gain the complete picture. It is imperative that we have a good understanding regarding the silence of the Scripture. The student of the Bible will soon recognize that God did not specifically address every conceivable idea that may ever materialize. Therefore, we must be as diligent in dealing with these situations as we are in areas where God has expressly stated His will. It is one thing to get someone to agree that a command of God is authoritative. It is quite another to get that same someone to agree that what God *didn't* say is as authoritative as what He did say.

The most common question asked whenever God has not spoken or authorized a particular thing is “*Why can't we...?*” What is the obvious motivation behind such a question?

- ◆ the apparent desire for a broad liberty to do as many things religiously as possible.
- ◆ the obvious rationale: if permitted to do those things not mentioned in the Bible, then not only can we do the “few” things God has mentioned, but we can also do the “thousands” of things that are not mentioned.

This issue is really decided with 2 extreme answers.

- ◆ God's silence is *permissive*
We are permitted to do any unmentioned thing as long as it is not specifically prohibited somewhere else in the Scripture.
- ◆ God's silence is *prohibitive*
This conforms to the *Law of Exclusion* (pg. 30). We are not permitted to do any unmentioned thing. This approach reasons that if God had wanted us to do something, He would have authorized it by any one of the 3 methods reviewed on pages 34-37.

When studying the topic of authority, probably no other aspect deals with respecting God more than this one. Respect is shown for God when we comply with what He has told us in His word, especially when we do it the way He has said. But respect for God is truly displayed when we show deference for Him and His will by not intruding into the areas where He has *not* spoken.

Disagreements over God's silence is not a new debate. It even pre-dates all the discussions brethren had last century over institutionalism and the work of the local church. This fundamental idea was part of the Great Protestant Reformation in the latter part of the 15th and early part of the 16th centuries.

- ◆ **Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)** German Reformer => founder of Lutheran Church
In his opposition to Catholicism, Luther taught that the Bible was to be accepted as the only rule of faith and practice. However, he taught that “what is not contrary to Scripture is for Scripture, and Scripture for it.” [*Luther's own words*]
 - simply stated, anything may be accepted as long as it isn't strictly prohibited in Scripture

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 8

- ◆ **Ulrich Zwingli (1484 – 1531)** Swiss Reformer => founder of (Dutch) Reformed Church
In his opposition to Roman Catholicism, Zwingli was greatly influenced by some of Luther's writings. He began preaching expository sermons from the Bible (unheard of in his day). He taught that whatever is not expressly commanded in the Scripture must be rejected.

Zwingli respected God's silence; Luther did not.
Unfortunately, the view of Luther became and remains the predominant attitude in Protestantism.

In this respect, we are in no different a position than those to whom these men appealed centuries ago. What will we do with the silence of the Scripture? Is it permissive or prohibitive?

Key verse on God's silence ➤ **Deut. 29:29**

What does this verse teach? _____

Principles Of God's Silence From The Old Testament

- ◆ *Israel at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:10-14)*
 - What did Israel have to learn to do? (vv. 13-14) _____
 - What had they already done? (vv. 11-12) _____
 - What were they eventually told to do? (v. 15) _____
 - What is the main lesson we learn here? (v. 16) _____
- ◆ *Israel during the Passover (Num. 9:1-14)*
 - What was Israel told to do? (vv. 2-3) _____
 - What did some men ask? (vv. 6-7) _____
 - What was Moses' reply? (v. 8) _____
 - How was this issue resolved? (vv. 10-12) _____

Examples Of Disregarding God's Silence From The Old Testament

- ◆ *Saul and his offering (1 Sam. 13:8-14)*
 - What was the king's reasoning? (vv. 8, 11-12) _____
 - How did Samuel respond? (v. 13) _____
 - What does this teach us? _____
- ◆ *David and the Temple (2 Sam. 7:1-7)*
 - What were David's plans? (v. 2) _____
 - Who else concurred with David? (v. 3) _____

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 8

- What was God's response? (vv. 4-7) _____
 - Did God have a plan for His dwelling place? (vv. 8-13) _____
 - What practical lessons for today do we learn from this episode? _____
-

Statements Regarding God's Silence From The New Testament

- ◆ **1 Pet. 4:11**
 - The battle cry during the days of the Restoration Movement
 - What exactly does this verse mean? _____
- ◆ **Heb. 1:5**
 - Who is being described in Heb. 1:1 - 2:4? _____
 - What is His relative position? (Heb. 1:2-4) _____
 - What is taught about God's silence in v. 5? _____
- ◆ **Heb. 7:11-14**
 - What is the theme of Heb. 5:1-10; 7:1-28? _____
 - What is the writer's point in Heb. 7:11-13? _____
 - What is taught about God's silence in v. 14? _____
- ◆ **Acts 15:24**
 - What was the issue described in this chapter? (v. 1) _____
 - What is taught about God's silence in v. 24? _____

One Final Word Of Caution

We must be careful not to confuse the silence of the Scripture with our earlier study on general and specific authority. We should not consider silence in a specific matter to be a lack of authority for a general command

- ◆ The Scripture is silent about song books, but not silent about what? _____
- ◆ The Scripture is silent about church buildings, but not silent about what? _____
- ◆ The Scripture is silent about gospel meetings, but not silent about what? _____

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 8

Conclusion

We must come to the conclusion that God's silence is absolutely authoritative, and that it is prohibitive, not permissive. We are the creatures; He is the Creator. We have no right to "invade His silence," for such is the sin of presumption.

We conclude this lesson by noting the following New Testament passages. Read them and list how they address our respect for the silence of the Scripture.

- ◆ Rom. 12:3; 1 Cor. 4:6

- ◆ 2 Jn. 9

- ◆ Col. 3:17

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 9

“I Will Build My Church...” (Mt. 16:18)

Fundamental Truths Revealed About The Lord’s N.T. Church

Introduction

That God calls every person (whether man or woman...Jew or Gentile) to leave sinful living and be reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ is a truth easily established by the gospel. Judgment at the last great day will be individual (**Rom. 14:11; 2 Cor. 5:10**); therefore, primary obligations and responsibilities are personal. No matter to what “groups” one belongs, he/she is still individually accountable.

With that said, the Scripture also places a high premium on collective obligations. Examples of these include family, civil, and secular. Most notably among these are one’s duties and activities in the N.T. church of the Lord. One cannot become saved from sin and then ignore or bypass the church of the New Testament. When we are converted [*covered at length on pages 5-7*], we understand the Lord “adds us to the church” (**Acts 2:47**). Since we do not control this activity, we must respect the obvious importance the Lord is placing on the very institution He promised to build (**Mt. 16:18**). The Lord does indeed “know those who are His” (**2 Tim. 2:19**), and He alone manages the “candlestick” belonging to each church (**Rev. 2:5**). He maintains His own “registry” of faithful and active enrollees in His kingdom.

Therefore, since we do not control and cannot alter the universal church, our focus must be on the local church level. Christians need to possess not only a correct but also an appreciative view of the local church of Christ. It is through the local church where God organizes saints and commands them to employ themselves into the work of the kingdom and worship together each week. How each disciple feels about the church is a direct reflection of how he/she feels about God, and will also indicate to what degree he/she will engage in the work and activities of the church.

“The church of God does not occupy the place in the hearts of men it should occupy until they realize that by staying on the outside of the church they rob themselves of life’s greatest blessings and of the hope of eternal life. The church is incomparably greater than all human institutions, sectarian or fraternal.”

- Roy E. Cogdill
The New Testament Church, p. 33

This lesson will focus on different aspects of the church’s importance.

The Church Of The Lord – Its Origin

Knowing when the Lord’s church began is important for the purposes of its identity. We must be able to distinguish it from all other agencies, from those of the Old Testament to modern-day groups founded by men [*see pages 8-11*].

- 1) How does **Heb. 9:11, 23; 10:1** show the church did not exist in O.T. days?

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 9

- 2) Be able to relate the prophecies found in **Isa. 2:2-3** & **Mic. 4:1-2** to the origin of the church.
- 3) How does **Lk. 24:46-47** & **Acts 1:4-8** help us understand the church's origin?
- 4) Be able to connect the prophecy in **Dan. 2:31-45** with the origin of the church.
- 5) What do the statements in **Mt. 3:1-2** & **11:11** teach us about the beginning of the church?
- 6) What do the statements in **Mk. 1:15** & **Mt. 10:7** teach us about the origin of the church?

The Church Of The Lord – Its Nature

The “nature” of the church of Christ is presented in multiple ways in the New Testament. With the use of each “metaphor” comes a different emphasis. We’ll notice 4 of them...

- 7) The church as a “called out” group => as seen in the actual meaning of the word “church”
[Greek *ekklesia* is “church” - term literally means “to call out” (cp. **Acts 19:32, 39, 41**)]
The New Testament portrays Christians as a “called out people” **universally** (**Mt. 16:18**) as well as **locally** (**1 Cor. 1:2**).

What aspect of this “calling” is emphasized in **2 Tim. 1:7-9** & **1 Pet. 5:10**?

What does **2 Thess. 2:13-14** & **1 Pet. 2:9** teach about this “calling?”

- 8) The church as the “household of God” => emphasis is on closeness as a family
(**1 Tim. 3:15**; **Eph. 2:19**; **3:15**)

What aspect of this “house” is emphasized in **Eph. 3:14** & **1 Cor. 8:6**?

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 9

What aspect of this "house" is emphasized in **Heb. 3:6**?

What aspect of this "house" is emphasized in **Rom. 8:14-17** & **Gal.4:7**?

How do the following passages illustrate the benefits for being in this "house?"

1 Jn. 3:1 _____

Mt. 6:6, 9 _____

Mt. 6:8; Lk. 11:9-13 _____

Heb. 12:5-11 _____

- 9) The church as a "kingdom" => emphasis on the imperial rule of Jesus Christ
(**Mk. 1:15; 2 Sam. 7:12-13; Acts 2:30-31; Jn. 18:33-37**)

What do we learn about the "kingdom" from **Jn. 18:36, Rom. 14:17, & Lk. 17:20-21**?

Where is this "kingdom's territory?" (**Lk. 4:5-8; Mt. 28:18-20**)

What is this "kingdom's law?" (**Jn. 12:48; 1 Cor. 9:21**)

- 10) The church as a "body" => emphasis on the head and various parts that have functions
(**Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18, 24; 1 Cor. 12:12-27**)

What does **Eph. 4:4** teach about this "body?"

What does **Eph. 5:24** teach about this "body" and its "Head?"

What does **Eph. 4:16** teach about the parts of this "body" working together?

What does **1 Cor. 12:15-19, 21** teach about the importance of the parts of this "body?"

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 9

The Church Of The Lord – Its Work

The work of the church of Christ is easily identifiable from the Scripture. It is here that many churches (*those built by men as well as churches of Christ who have a "liberal" view of the Bible*) go astray. These churches involve themselves in works for which there is **no** authority. One of the passages that comes to mind is one we've examined previously...Mt. 7:21-23.

The **main** point always to be remembered...the church is a Divine institution. Therefore, her work or her "mission" is equally Divine. The church is not a political or social institution; it is a spiritual one. Her concern is not the entertainment or physical needs of people but the saving of souls.

Simply put, the church's work is three-fold. All 3 of these important works can be established and substantiated by multiple passages from the Scripture.

11) EVANGELISM => the **primary** work of the Lord's church

How do the following passages show the universal need of salvation?

Rom. 3:9-10, 23 _____

Gal. 3:22 _____

Eph. 2:1, 12 _____

How does the gospel rectify this? (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-4)

Be able to connect Jn. 8:31-32 & 1 Tim. 3:14-15 with this work.

How do the following passages illustrate the church's involvement in evangelism?

Acts 13:1-3; 14:26-27 _____

2 Cor. 11:8-9 _____

Phil. 1:3-5; 4:14-16 _____

We need to understand **how** local churches support gospel preaching. It is in this area where departures from the Biblical pattern have occurred in the past & continue to occur.

Support of the gospel locally => 1 Cor 9:3-18; cp. Acts 18:1-3

Support of the gospel in other places => 2 Cor. 11:7-9; Phil 4:10-16

What is the pattern shown in these passages?

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 9

Did 1st century churches cooperate in this work? (2 Cor. 11:8)

Departures from this pattern

- "Missionary Society" (1800's)
- "Sponsoring Church" (mid 1900's & present-day)

What principle from 1 Pet. 5:2 helps us identify such "departures from the pattern?"

★ Be able to distinguish from "**cooperation**" and "**coordination.**"

12) EDIFICATION => how saints in a local church are strengthened

Define "edify" or "edification."

Use the following passages to define, understand, & illustrate "edification."

1 Cor. 14:2-5 _____

1 Cor. 14:12-19, 26 _____

Eph. 4:11-16 _____

Rom. 14:19 – 15:2 _____

Heb. 3:12-13; 10:24-25 _____

Referring back to material on page 31, how have some churches of Christ sought to "edify" their members through the church treasury?

How do other churches (both denominational & some churches of Christ) "socially" try to edify their members under the guise of religion?

How does the emphasis of the above passages compare to how you answered the previous 2 questions?

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 9

13) BENEVOLENCE => how needy members of the church are cared for

Define "benevolence."

There are nine N.T. passages that instruct us on who may be helped benevolently from the treasury of the local church of Christ. In the blank beside each passage, write who it is that can be assisted.

Acts 2:44-45 _____	1 Cor. 16:1-3 _____
Acts 4:32-35 _____	2 Cor. 8:4 _____
Acts 6:1-6 _____	2 Cor. 9:1, 12-13 _____
Acts 11:27-30 _____	1 Tim. 5:16 _____
Rom. 15:25-31 _____	

How have some churches of Christ sought to relieve the needs of people? How do these compare with the pattern revealed in the passages cited above?

The Church Of The Lord – Its Organization

To accept the word of God as Divinely-inspired also means we accept how He has organized and established the "government" of His church...universally and locally. How man-made churches organize themselves is another example of their overall failure to respect the teaching of the Scripture.

14) How has mainstream Catholicism organized itself?

15) How has mainstream denominationalism organized itself?

16) What one word would you use to describe these examples: *Dependent* or *Autonomous*?

17) What does Eph. 1:22-23 & Col. 1:18 teach about church organization? On what level?

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 9

- 18) What does **Acts 14:23**, **Phil. 1:1**, & **Titus 1:5** teach about church organization? On what level?

- 19) What does **1 Tim. 3:1-7, 8-10, 12-13** & **Titus 1:6-9** teach about church organization? How do these passages harmonize with **1 Pet. 5:1-4**?