

# *The Authority of the Scriptures*

**Introduction:** Rules and laws are the basis for any orderly society. They keep us aware of what is required of us. They establish social norms of right and wrong. They tell us what we may, and may not, do. The laws of God are of greater importance than any man-made ones. Therefore we must learn them. We must look to a source. The source can be what inspired men of God have recorded or that which uninspired men who claim they have a right to invent religious laws. We must decide which we should follow. This lesson seeks to prove why we should do so.

## **I. FEELINGS ARE SUBJECTIVE, NOT OBJECTIVE, AND THEREFORE MUST NOT BE TRUSTED AS ANY STANDARD OF AUTHORITY IN MATTERS OF RELIGION**

- A. The heart is "deceitful above all things" (Jeremiah 17:9 NKJV).
- B. Man is unable to know how to correctly walk life's pathways (Jer. 10:23).
- C. Man's conscience can be:
  - 1. Fooled or deceived (Proverbs 15:26).
  - 2. Desensitized to the truth (1 Timothy 4:2; Jude 12).
- D. Following the heart can lead men into terrible error and sin!
  - 1. Moral anarchy (Judges 17:6; 21:25).
  - 2. Religious division/confusion (1 Corinthians 1:10).
- E. Paul's warning! (1 Corinthians 10:12).
- F. *We dare not trust mere feelings, however strong or sincere, as the standard we use or what we believe about ourselves or in any matter of religion. Too much is at stake. History and experience prove the mistake people have made in trusting them.*

## **II. THE BIBLE, SPECIFICALLY THE NEW TESTAMENT, MUST SERVE AS THE ONLY OBJECTIVE STANDARD OF AUTHORITY IN MATTERS OF RELIGION FOR OUR AGE**

- A. Defining terms
  - 1. "Standard" – "the type, model, or example commonly or generally accepted or adhered to; criterion set for usages or practices" (Webster's New World Dictionary, page 1306).
  - 2. "Authority" = "the power or right to give commands, enforce obedience, take action, or make final decisions; jurisdiction" (op cit., page 92).
- B. The New Testament is God's Will for us today because:
  - 1. Jesus has "all authority" in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18).
  - 2. His words will judge us all on the Last Day (John 12:48).
  - 3. The words of Jesus' Apostles are also authoritative as Christ gave them all (not just Peter; the Greek is plural) power to "bind and loose" the decrees already set in heaven by Christ (Matthew 16:19).
    - a. The Holy Spirit guided the Apostles ("inspired").

- b. Scriptures they wrote are therefore "*God breathed*" (2 Timothy 3:16 (NIV)).
    - c. Thus *their words* are God's words.
    - d. The New Testament records *their words!*
  - 4. Peter testified that Paul's writings were considered equal to "the other Scriptures (Holy Writings, that is, the Old Testament writings) (2 Peter 3:16); c.f., 1 Corinthians 14:37.
  - 5. Jude stated that "the faith" (that which comprises the entire Christian experience which would naturally include all doctrine) was delivered "once for all" (Jude 1:3).
  - 6. Scriptures testify that the words and teachings of uninspired men, who would equate them with inspired men's teachings are invalid:
    - a. Pharisees - Matthew 15:9.
    - b. Heretics (Judaizing Christians) (Colossians 2:20-22).
    - c. Gnostics (1 John 2:3-5; 4:6).
    - d. Those who would add to, or detract from, Apostolic Writ (Revelation 22:18, 19).
- C. *Thus while we may trust the recorded words of inspired men, such as Jesus and His Apostles in the New Testament, we can have no such confidence in the words and teachings of self-proclaimed religious leaders of today or our personal opinions. God has strongly warned against any and all divergence (Galatians 1:8, 9). We should trust and follow only the Scriptures. Only in them can we be certain of Holy Spirit guided transmission with complete and total accuracy.*

### **III. MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE BOTH IN QUANTITY AND UNANIMITY MAKES THE BIBLE THE ONLY RELIABLE STANDARD OF AUTHORITY IN MATTERS OF RELIGION**

- A. Since the Bible is inspired of God we must view it as:
  - 1. Entirely trustworthy (1 John 1:5; Hebrews 6:18).
  - 2. Containing God's own commandments (1 Corinthians 14:37).
  - 3. That which shall judge our eternal destiny (John 12:48; Revelation 20:12).
- B. The documented evidence is overwhelming and overwhelmingly in agreement:
  - 1. Over 5,000 manuscripts in whole or part.
  - 2. Four major codices (primary volumes), some dating to within a few hundred years of the actual recorded conversations and events.
  - 3. Unity of information despite the fact that about 40 different authors recorded events over a span of about 1500 years!
  - 4. No comparable historical documentation exists for any other historical record. If we trust those documents, to any extent, as factual information, in whole or part, we must likewise accept the Holy Scriptures as such.

- C. Oral traditions are too easily corrupted or mistranslated over time and therefore cannot be comparably trustworthy as the documented evidence of the Scriptures.
- D. *The Scriptures provide a clear and common ground for unity in all matters of religion, a unity that God desires as seen by the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ and the express direction of the Apostle Paul (John 17:20, 21; 1 Cor. 1:10; Ephesians 4:3). Only in misunderstanding and misapplication, or the “twisting” of them (2 Peter 3:16) prohibits such unity. It has been the plea of churches of Christ that all who claim Christ will strive to restore New Testament Christianity in all its forms in the simplicity which the Scriptures authorize and make clear.*

**CONCLUSION:** The Scriptures alone provide a completely reliable source of information about God’s (Yahweh’s) Will for us today. They may therefore serve as the only objective standard of authority in all matters of religion. It is to them that we must give our attention, learning, thought, understanding and practical application. Only in them do we find the very Word of God by which eternal judgment, salvation or rejection, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ, shall mete to us all.