

“OUR NEED FOR BIBLICAL AUTHORITY” (#5)

Introduction

- I. From our last lesson, we learned that authority is established in one or a combination of the following three ways:
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
- II. After having learned how to establish Bible authority, there are some other questions that need to be answered as well.
 - A. Upon our establishing authority, such basic questions as: Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? can be answered.
 - B. In connection with Bible study, answering those six questions goes far in helping us understand what we read!
 - C. In addition to answering those questions, a major question we need to ask after having established Bible authority is the following: “Is the authority we have general/generic or specific?”
 - 1. Specific – “Statements, commands, or actions which specify certain options to be used in doing what we are commanded.”
 - 2. Generic – “Unspecified actions left for us to decide in carrying out a specific activity.”
- III. In this lesson, we will emphasize the difference between general/generic authority and specific authority. May this lesson help us to respect the difference!

Discussion

I. DO WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN GENERAL AND SPECIFIC AUTHORITY?

- A. Some confusion exists among folks who insist that every activity authorized of God must be specifically named in order for it to be approved of God. Examples:
 - 1. “There is no authority for a church building.”
 - 2. “There is no authority for lights in the building.”
 - 3. “There is no authority for air conditioning/heating system in the building.”
 - 4. What is meant: “I can’t find a “thou shalt ...” for those things, so it is wrong.
- B. Such confusion is unnecessary when we recognize that authority can be general or specific.
- C. We recognize “general” and “specific” authority in other aspects of life:
 - 1. Example: Mother tells John, “Go buy a gallon of milk.” **Generic authority** answers such questions as:
 - a. How is John to “go”? _____
 - b. What kind of currency can he use to “buy” the milk? _____
 - c. What kind of “milk” might he choose? _____
 - d. What container might hold this gallon of milk? _____
 - 2. Example: Dad tells Sally, “Take the LeSabre and get it washed and come home.” **Specific authority** answers such questions as:
 - a. What vehicle must Sally drive? _____
 - b. What is the only thing Sally is to do to the car? _____
 - c. After the wash, does she have authority (permission) to go to the mall and buy a dress? _____
 - 3. Other examples: Doctors’ prescriptions, Catalog orders, etc.
- D. If we recognize these truths in our day-to-day activities, why can we not recognize the reality of specific and general authority in spiritual matters?

II. SPECIFIC AUTHORITY:

- A. Some rules concerning specific authority:
 1. God must first have authorized the activity.
 2. Specific authority takes precedence over general authority. When God specifies something, we have no options!
 3. When God has specifically authorized a thing, it excludes everything else in that category.
- B. Some examples of specific authority (give Scripture for your answer):
 1. God specified the “priestly” tribe who would serve Him in Old Testament days. _____
 2. God specified the tribe through which Christ would come. _____
 3. God specified the day upon which to observe the Lord’s Supper and give of our means. _____
 4. God specified the kind of music we are to have in worship. _____

III. GENERAL AUTHORITY:

- A. Some rules concerning general authority:
 1. God must first have authorized the activity.
 2. General authority is seen in those things which are not specifically mentioned, yet lawful.
 3. With general authority, we have some options as how to fulfill our responsibility.
- B. Some examples of general authority:
 1. Noah was told to build an ark (_____). What tools was he to use? _____
 2. Christ commands folks to be baptized (_____). Where might one be baptized? _____
 3. We are to teach the gospel (_____). In what ways can we teach? _____

Fill in the blanks in this table below. Hopefully, this will help us in further understanding the difference between “general/generic” and “specific” authority.

| <u>Subject</u> | <u>General Authority</u> | <u>Includes</u> | <u>Specific Authority</u> | <u>Excludes</u> |
|---|--------------------------|--|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Ark (Genesis 6:14) | “Make ... an ark” | | “Gopher Wood” | |
| Teaching (Mark 16:15) | “Go” | | “Preach the gospel” | |
| Singing in Worship (Ephesians 5:19) | | Songbooks, papers, singing by memory | | Mechanical instruments |
| Baptism (Acts 2:38; etc.) | “repent and be baptized” | | “repent and be baptized” | |
| Lord’s Supper (Matthew 26:26-28; Acts 20:7; etc.) | | Containers to hold the elements | | No other day of the week |
| Assembling (Hebrews 10:25; I Corinthians 11:20) | | Meeting house, rented, owned, what time of day, etc. | | Forsaking the assembling, etc. |

– Jarrod Jacobs