

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." - Ephesians 5:23

Volume 33

Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

December 1999

No. 12

HOW TO KNOW WHAT GOD REQUIRES OF US

by Ted J. Clarke

INTRODUCTION

Determining how the Bible authorizes us to do what God wants done and knowing what not to do are crucial matters regarding our faith. **Authority** can be defined as "the power or right to do something, to perform in a certain way." It is vital that we understand how the Bible gives us the right to perform religiously in certain ways while forbidding other acts. Why? Because there are multitudes of examples in the Scriptures where people acted in ways which God did not authorize nor approve. For example, Cain's worship was rejected by God while Abel's was accepted (Genesis 4:1-7). Why? In Hebrews 11:4 we are told, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Paul ties these points together by telling us that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). What that means, simply, is that God revealed to both Cain and Abel what He wanted, and that Abel believed and obeyed what God said, while Cain acted without authority from God and sinned by doing so.

The major reason that God revealed the Scriptures was so that we could know His will, what He wants us to do and not to do. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Still, the Bible is a big book that says many different things, some of which are hard to understand, others easy. Can an individual truly know what God expects of him/her? Absolutely! See John 7:17; 8:31-32. A few common sense rules will help make what seems to be difficult easier.

OLD AND NEW COVENANTS

One of the first rules to remember is that there are significant differences between the Old and New Testaments (covenants). The Old Testament (OT) deals primarily with God's work among the Israelite nation, through whom He was to bring

Christ into the world. The New Testament (NT) claims that it is different and "better" than the Old (Hebrews 8:1-13). While OT law was nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14-17), it still has great value for us. In it we see God's faithfulness to carry out His promises, giving us comfort and hope (Romans 15:4). It also gives us examples of the kinds of mistakes Israel made in sinning against God, so that we can avoid such tragedies (1 Corinthians 10:6, 11). However, the OT is not our standard of how to live, worship, and serve God.

Christ's law holds us to some higher principles than the OT, where God once tolerated some things He no longer allows (Matthew 5:21-48; 19:1-9; Acts 17:30-31). Worship under Christ's NT has also changed from the OT way (John 4:21-24; Hebrews 7:12-14). We have **no authority** to go back to the OT for a special class of priests, burning of incense, instrumental music, or any other practices of Jewish worship. Christians in the Lord's Church will worship by Christ's authority, not Moses'. "And whatsoever you do in word or deed (teaching and practice - TJC), do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by Him" (Colossians 3:17). This is the **authority principle** for NT Christians.

ESTABLISHING NEW TESTAMENT AUTHORITY

God's word must be honored in matters of worship (John 4:23-24), as well as all other areas of one's life (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We have no authority to add to or take from God's holy word (Revelation 22:18-19; Colossians 3:17). We must have book, chapter, and verse authority for all that we do in religion (1 Peter 4:11).

Direct statements in the Scriptures can authorize or prohibit what we do. Sometimes these are statements of fact such as, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Commands are also direct statements which authorize us to act. "Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission

of sins" illustrates this point (Acts 2:38). Of course, the context or setting of these statements (who, what, when, where, how and why?) will determine if they apply to each of us.

Examples, or accounts of actions, of individuals acting by the authority of Christ can also be authority for us to perform the same activities (2 Thessalonians 3:7; Hebrews 13:7; 1 Peter 2:21). Here again, we must be aware of the setting or situation of each example to determine whether it is required for us to do the same. Acts 20:7 is an apostolic example, as Paul met with the church in Troas on the first day of the week (Sunday) to "break bread," meaning to observe the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). The total teaching of the NT establishes that this example is binding on the Lord's church. Since the only day expressed in the Scriptures on which to observe the Communion is the first day of the week, Sunday is the only day on which we are authorized to partake of the Lord's Supper. Since we are commanded to observe the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-28; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34), the time of observance illustrated in this example is not optional. It is the only time authorized!

Implication is another way that the Scriptures authorize us to act. Explicit teaching is when the Scriptures teach something outright, such as, "Repent, and be baptized...for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Implicit teaching is when the Bible implies something (demands that something must be so) without saying it in so many words. To illustrate, consider the command in Hebrews 10:25 to assemble ourselves together. The command to "assemble" implies a time, a place, and a purpose, although none of those things are mentioned directly in that verse. We know from passages like 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 and chapter 16:1-2, plus Acts 20:7, that the time is the first day of every week (Sunday) and the purpose is to worship God. However, since no specific place is taught in the NT, the church has **implied authority** to meet in the open air, in people's homes, in a rented building, or to buy or build a meeting place. Matters

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FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

USPS Publication # 211780

...is a Periodical publication issued monthly by the Church of Christ at Third and Bethel (P.O. Box 251), Mammoth Spring, AR 72554-0251. **POSTMASTER: Please mail all changes of address to the above address.**

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FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

P. O. Box 251

Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

Ted J. Clarke EDITOR

Phone (870) 625-3217

Fax (870) 625-3137

E-Mail tedjc@centurytel.net

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that are implied in direct statements or examples are fully authorized.

A note of warning is appropriate here. We must not add to God's word by claiming things are implied when they are not. The command to "sing" in worship to God implies a song (words and tune), and would authorize a songbook or songleader if desired (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). If these things are used, Christians are still doing nothing but the commanded "singing." However, if one should say that mechanical instruments of music were authorized in worship because of the command to sing, that person would be adding to God's word. **The command to sing does not imply playing mechanical instruments of music in order to sing!** Playing instrumental music adds another kind of music to the command to sing. Such is not authorized at all in the NT; not by command, example, nor implication.

CONCLUSION

Think of the differences between the OT and NT, and the ways that direct statements, examples, and implication authorize us to live and serve God. As

you think on these things, apply these principles to the elements of your religion. Are you worshipping and serving God according to the OT instead of the NT of Christ? Are the things you teach and do in worship authorized by the name of Christ in direct statements, approved examples, or genuine implication from the NT?

If not, you need to cease practicing and teaching those things for which you have no authority! If you need help understanding or applying these concepts, why not engage in a study with a preacher, elder, or teacher from the Church of Christ nearest you?

DISPLEASURE OF GOD

by Owen D. Olbricht

The character of God is important for us to understand so that we can properly relate to Him. If we are not careful we will see but one side of His nature. A popular attitude toward God is that He is an all loving God who extends His love and grace to us unconditionally. This may be a comforting attitude, but is a distorted view of God.

God is a God who abhors and hates, and can be wrathful, angry, indignant, and given to fury. This may not be the way we want to think of God but the Bible describes Him in these terms. The things God did in His displeasure to those in the past are written as examples for us so we can realize God's attitude toward evil doers (1 Corinthians 10:6, 11).

OLD TESTAMENT

In the Old Testament are mentioned the following approximate number of times concerning God's fury, 60 times; wrath, 105 times; and anger, 195 times. God expressed these emotions toward people and their manner of living because of His displeasure and indignation (Numbers 11:1; Isaiah 30:30) as a righteous and just God.

God's anger, wrath, and/or fury are frequently mentioned together (Isaiah 63:3, 6; Jeremiah 7:20; 21:5; 32:37; Ezekiel 5:15; 8:17, 18). God was angry with Moses (Exodus 4:14), the nation of Israel (Numbers 11:1), Miriam and Aaron (Numbers 12:9), and many others. His wrath also is mentioned against Israel (Numbers 16:40; Deuteronomy 9:7, 22). His anger, wrath, and indignation was against Israel because of their many sins and service to other gods (Deuteronomy 29:28).

NEW TESTAMENT

This same description of God continues in the New Testament. Jesus was angry with hard-hearted Jews (Mark 3:5). God's wrath abides on those who do not obey Jesus (John 3:36, see ASV) and the disobedient (Romans 1:18; 2:5, 8; Ephesians 2:3; 5:6; Colossians 3:6). The book of Revelation frequently mentions the wrath of God (Revelation 6:16, 17, 18; 14:10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19; 19:15). Through Jesus we can be saved from the wrath of God (Romans 5:9).

GOD ABHORS AND HATES

The word abhor means to loath and is used as a synonym for hate. Does God abhor and hate evil doers? Some assure us that God hates sin but loves the sinner. This is not altogether true.

God is said to abhor evil doers: "And ye shall not walk in the manner of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them" (Leviticus 20:23). "And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you" (Leviticus 26:30). "And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons and daughters" (Deuteronomy 32:19). "...the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man" (Psalm 5:6b). "Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance" (Psalm 106:40).

Besides abhorring wicked people, God hates iniquity (Hebrews 1:9) and also evil people. "...thou hatest all workers of iniquity" (Psalm 5:5b). "...the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth" (Psalm 11:5b). See also Hosea 9:15; Malachi 1:3. Through inspiration David wrote he hated evil doers with a perfect hatred (Psalm 26:5; 31:6; 139:21, 22).

EXPRESSION OF GOD'S DISPLEASURE

God has shown His anger, wrath, hatred, and fury by how He has dealt with evil doers. He struck dead the following: the wicked world in the days of Noah (Genesis 6:23), Onan (Genesis 38:10), the first-born throughout Egypt (Exodus 12:29), Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1, 2), the people of Israel (Numbers 14:29; 16:41; 25:1-9), Uzzah (2 Samuel 6:6-8), and others. Not only is God this way in the Old Testament but He is the same in the New Testament as is revealed by the death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10).

We need to fear because our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29) and because it is a fearful thing to fall into His hands (Hebrews 10:27-31). Paul persuaded people because he realized the terror of the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:11).

CONCLUSION

Because of God's displeasure with us when we do evil, we should carefully serve Him and fear to disobey Him (Matthew 10:28; Luke 1:50, 74; 12:5; Acts 9:31; Ephesians 5:21; Philippians 2:12; 1 Peter 1:17). Perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18), but none of us has perfect love. God loves all of us but if we will not respond to His love by loving obedience to Him, His wrath abides on us (John 3:36). In order to remain in God's love, we must follow Jesus' example of keeping God's commandments. Jesus said, "If you keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love" (John 15:9, 10). "If" in this statement must imply our remaining in God's love is conditional.

We should keep a balance in our view of God and not so emphasize one side of His nature that we overlook His other. He is a God of grace and love but we should never forget that He is also a God of justice, anger, and wrath.

305 W. Maryland Ave.
Sherwood, AR 72120

THE THREE DISPENSATIONS

Bible Lesson Number Four

by Richard England

The word "dispensation" is used here because, according to Webster, it means "a general state or ordering of things; *specif.*: a system of revealed commands and promises regulating human affairs." Even though there are certain concepts which God has required in every age, such as faith and obedience, the specific commands to be obeyed have not always been the same. There are three basic ways, or ages, in which God has dealt with man.

The first dispensation might well be called the Patriarchal age. Patriarchal means having to do with the father or patriarch of a family. God at one time dealt directly with the heads of families. The father worshipped and offered sacrifices for the entire family. Cain and Abel did this, having received instructions from God (Genesis 4:3, 4; Hebrews 11:4). Job also offered sacrifice for his family (Job

1:5). But, animal sacrifice could not atone for sins.

During the Patriarchal age, God called Abraham and separated him from the others in the world that through him he might send the Savior who could indeed take away sins. God promised Abraham: "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). Abraham begat Isaac, Isaac begat Jacob who was also called Israel. Jacob's twelve sons became the heads of twelve tribes (or families) who, together, composed the nation of Israel. Through events surrounding the life of Joseph, Jacob and all his family went into Egypt. With the death of the Pharaoh who had befriended Joseph and his family, "...there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph" (Exodus 1:8). The Israelites became slaves.

After the twelve tribes of Israel had been enslaved to the Egyptians for more than four hundred years, God raised up Moses to lead them out of bondage and into a land selected for their habitation. Having left Egypt, and before they entered the land that God had promised, Moses received at Mt. Sinai, the Law from God for the Israelites. The Law included the Ten Commandments and all the ordinances governing their lives and their worship. The Law was both a religious law and a civil law. This ushered in the second period or age which could be called the Mosaic period, after the one through whom God gave the Law. Those who were not Israelites did not receive the Law. Until the Law was fulfilled, the Patriarchal period and the Law period ran concurrently. Those who were not Israelites continued in the Patriarchal arrangement.

The Law was not intended to last until the end of all time, but only until the Savior, the seed of Abraham, who is Jesus Christ, came. Among other texts of the Bible, the entire third chapter of the book of Galatians is devoted to this very matter. Especially notice these three verses: "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Galatians 3:23-25). The Law, with its ordinances and ceremonies, in that it contains figures, shadows and types of things that were to come, provides understanding

of God's ultimate plan in Christ (Hebrews 9:9; 10:1). Jesus was born under the Law and lived under it (Galatians 4:4). He is the only man who lived without breaking it in any way.

When Jesus died on the cross, the Law was fulfilled (Matthew 5:18) and he "...took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Colossians 2:14). No longer does God speak to the heads of the families. No longer does God speak through the Law of Moses. Now he speaks through his Son, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1, 2). This is the third and final dispensation, the Christian age.

Jesus has been given all authority (Matthew 28:18). We will be judged by the things he has said (John 12:48-49). God foretold this through Moses and the other prophets (Deuteronomy 18:15-20).

At the end of this age, Jesus will come again (Acts 1:11), all the dead will be raised (John 5:28, 29), those still living will be changed (1 Corinthians 15:52), the judgment of all people will take place (Matthew 25:31-46) and the earth and heavens that we now see will be dissolved (2 Peter 3:9-14). There will not be a period of a thousand years in which Jesus will reign on this earth as King. He is now King and will remain so until he comes again for His Kingdom and gives it back to God. (1 Corinthians 15:23-26).

Questions

1. Has God always dealt with man in the same way? Has he always required the same things of all men?
2. What could we call the first period of God's dealing with man? What does the word Patriarch mean?
3. When did the second period of God's dealing with man begin? What is the second period called?
4. What was one of the purposes of the Law of Moses?
5. When did these two periods end?
6. When did the law of Christ become effective?
7. When will the Christian dispensation end?

439 Barham Ave.
Henderson, TN 38340

Some people complain because God put thorns on roses, while others praise Him for putting roses among thorns.

Are You In Love With The World?

1 John 2:15-17

by Joel Wheeler

One of the greatest downfalls among Christians has been worldliness. Paul even wrote about a man once faithful to the gospel, but who forsook his eternal reward. "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world..." (2 Tim. 4:10). The apostle John warned, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). If we are not careful we can fall in love with the world. The Bible describes some characteristics of the world to which we can fall prey.

The cares of the world. Jesus said that the "care of this world" or the anxiety which is caused by the world chokes out the word of God in man (Matt. 13:22). There are many things in this world that cause anxiety or worry. Most people in this world worry about not having enough money and possessions. Many divorces in the United States are caused by money problems. Jesus said the solution was to "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). Covetousness, which Paul said was idolatry (Col. 3:5), leads to hate, greed, lying, stealing and other acts of sin.

The wisdom of this world. Paul said by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that the world through its wisdom does not know God (1 Cor. 1:21). The wisdom of the world is mere foolishness in the ears of God. Man's wisdom is destroyed by the word of God and the preaching of the cross (1 Cor. 1:18-20). Many gospel preachers who were once faithful have been destroyed by secular education. The world's number one philosophy is Secular Humanism, which elevates man and degrades God. If one is not careful, secular education and human philosophy will give him a false sense of pride.

The fashion of this world. The world has a mold into which many fit. Christians must not be molded to the world's form. Paul wrote, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2). Most people accept homosexuality as simply a "way of life" instead of sin. Those who oppose it and other acts of fornication are considered ignorant and out of touch with

society. Music, immodest dress, and liberal thinking are just a few things that shape the world in which we live.

The friend of the world is the enemy of God (James 4:4) and the lust of the world will pass away (1 John 2:17). God's word will stand forever. It is impossible to serve the world and be a servant to God. We are either servants of sin or servants of righteousness. Which are you?

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-TED J. CLARKE, EDITOR

CONTRIBUTIONS

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Church of Christ, Bakersfield, Mo.	\$25.00
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**GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP
- COLOSSIANS 3:17**

1. **LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; 16:1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).
3. **SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
4. **GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
5. **PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-23).

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