**Authority of God**

**Understanding the Scriptures**

In our previous study, we learned that God revealed His will to inspired apostles and prophets who taught and wrote by the authority of His son, Jesus. We also learned that God’s truths were once for all delivered in the first century and that we are commanded to earnestly contend for the faith and reject any “other gospels”. Finally, we noted that the Old Law was taken away and nailed to the cross of Jesus, making the New Testament our only standard of faith and practice.

That being said, it is critical that we cultivate the ability to read and understand the principles taught in the New Testament so we can make proper application in our teaching and lives. God’s word is not written like an NCAA rule book. It is a combination of direct statements and commands as well as historic accounts of first century people pleasing and displeasing God. Therefore, there are three ways God reveals His will to us in the inspired scriptures.

**Direct statement or command**

Often God’s will is stated directly. We partake of the Lord’s Supper because Jesus told us to (Luke 22:19-20). Jesus also said, “This do in remembrance of me.” We are told directly what to do and why to do it. But when should we partake of the Lord’s Supper?

**Approved Example**

The apostle Paul told us to follow his example and the footsteps of those who walk according to the pattern he had left (Phil. 3:17). The Holy Spirit often conveyed the will of God by showing us “how it’s done”. For example, there are no passages that state explicitly when the Lord’s Supper is to be taken. However, God revealed to us that saints came together on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7). We know that God approved because the apostle Paul preached to them in that assembly. Therefore, we partake of the Lord’s Supper like Jesus told us to and we do it on the first day of the week like approved saints did.

**Necessary Inference (Unavoidable Conclusion)**

Sometimes God reveals His will by stating truth in such a way that certain inferences are unavoidable and must be respected. With regard to the Lord’s Supper, Jesus simply said to use bread, however God had told us in verse 1 of the same chapter (Luke 22) that Jesus and His disciples were celebrating the Jewish Feast of Unleavened Bread when Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper. Without any doubt, Jesus used unleavened bread to institute the Lord’s Supper. We use the same unleavened bread when we partake of the Lord’s Supper as Jesus used when He instituted it.

**Congregational Funds? Applying the Principles**

Someone may ask, where is the authority for a local church to have collective funding? If we have no authority, we should have no such funds.

**Direct Statement** – 1 Cor. 16:1-2 gives instructions on generating money for helping needy saints by a free-will offering of the members on the first day of the week. But is benevolence the only authorized use of these funds?

**Approved Example** – The apostle Paul commended the church in Philippi for sending aid once and again for his necessities. This is an approved example of a local church using some of their funds to support those preaching the gospel, not simple benevolence.

**Necessary Inference –** The church in Philippi got the money to send to Paul from somewhere. Since free-will offerings of the members is the only authorized method for raising funds, it necessarily follows that they generated those funds through contributions in their Sunday assemblies per 1 Cor. 16:1-2.