**BIBLE TALK**

**On KTTR (99.7 FM) Every Sunday at 8:30 a.m.**

**Rolla, Missouri**

**How To Interpret the Bible (Pt. 2)**

**8/2/2020**

Last week on our program we asked the question, how do we go about interpreting the word of God, the Bible? We emphasized the fact that since God has chosen words, human language to communicate His will to us, then the rules we use to interpret human language every day are the rules we would use to interpret the words of the Bible. Since God has chosen human language to communicate His will to us, it seems evident that the rules that we normally use in interpreting what others say will then be the rules God intends for us to use to interpret what He has said.

And we also emphasized last week that the process of communicating by words involves three avenues, 1) express statements (which includes commands), 2) examples, and 3) inferences, or necessary conclusions. If we are trying to communicate something to someone else by means of words, it will be in these three ways. We tell someone what we want. This is direct and can be a command or statement. We show someone what we want by giving examples or illustrations. Or we imply what we want others to know by the express statements and the examples we give.

Last week we talked about express statements, and today we want to talk about examples and necessary conclusions as the means by which God communicates His will to us.

Certainly God intended to teach us something by way of examples in view of the many examples that are given in the Bible. God did not reveal His will to us just by “thou shalt’s” and “thou shalt nots.” He gave examples of what He wants us to do and not do.

It is evident from the following passages that examples do teach. In 1 Cor. 11:1, Paul said to the church in Corinth, *“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.”* Notice, they were to follow Paul’s example as he followed Christ. In Phil. 4:9 Paul said to the church in Philippi, *“The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”* Not only were they to do what they had heard in Paul, but what they saw in him. His example was also to be followed. And we have many of these examples recorded in Scripture. God intended for these recorded examples to teach us something.

The early church was instructed in apostolic teaching. Act 2:42 says that *“they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine.”* Not only do we have express statements given by the apostles to the churches, but we also have examples of churches carrying out the instructions of the apostles. Therefore, not only the express statements, but the examples serve as a means of determining what is the pattern of apostolic instruction. And so as we see the churches described in the New Testament , we find them as a model or a pattern of apostolic teaching.

For example, as we read the New Testament we learn that the early church’s organization was limited to the local church. Each local church was autonomous and independent. And it is evident that the churches did not develop their own organization themselves. If the various churches had developed their own organization from their own ideas, then the churches would have had different types of organization. But in the New Testament we read that the various churches were organized the same. And so the instructions and examples regarding church organization serve as a model or pattern of the apostles’ teaching on the subject of the organization of the church. For us to reject this patternis to reject the apostles’ teaching. Both express statements and the examples given form the apostolic teaching on this subject.

But God also teaches us by means of inferences or necessary conclusions. What do we mean by inferences? If something is not clearly commanded or definitely stated, it may be so worded that it is necessarily inferred. An inference is simply a conclusion which is reached from facts already known. We call these premises. A necessary conclusion is one that unavoidably follows from the premises.

Let us look at some examples where Jesus drew inferences from scripture to teach the truth.

Look with me first of all in Matthew 19:3-6. In verse 3 Jesus is asked the question, *“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?”* Jesus responds by saying, *“Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”* In Jesus’ answer He lays down the premises by quoting two passages of scripture. The first one is Genesis 1:27 where it says that God *“made them male and female.”* The second scripture is Genesis 2:24 where it says, *“‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?”* Two conclusions Jesus draws from these two statements: 1) God has joined the two together. Since God made them male and female and instituted marriage, He therefore, is the one who joins them together in marriage. And 2) *“What God has joined together, let not man separate.”* And well known fact is whatever God joins together, man must not tamper with it. Notice, the conclusions that Jesus draws are not expressly stated in Genesis chapters one and two. But those conclusions are there nonetheless. The conclusions are implied in those statements. And God intended for the Jews to draw those conclusions. God is perfectly aware of all that His word says, and all that His word implies. God knows the inferences that are deduced from His written word. And I suggest that God not only knows the inferences that are deduced from His word, He intends for us to draw them. The inferences are a part of His will.

Look with me at another example. In Mark 12 Jesus is speaking with Sadducees who believed there is no resurrection from the dead. In verses 26 and 27 Jesus makes an argument for the resurrection. He says, *“But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.”*

Jesus lays down two premises. The first one is taken from Exodus 3:6 when God said to Moses at the burning bush, *“I am the God of your father -- the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”*  Now, at the time God made this statement to Moses, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were dead, that is, dead physically. But God said, “I am” (present tense) their God. The second premise Jesus lays down is, God *“is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.”* The conclusion Jesus draws from these two premises is, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still living, though not physically. And Jesus concludes that this proves a resurrection. The conclusion is not expressly stated in Exodus 3, but is implied, and it is implied from the very tense of the verb, “I am.” Even though not expressly stated, the truth of the resurrection is there nonetheless. The Sadducees were able to come to that conclusion themselves if they wanted to see it.

These examples show conclusively that God’s will is not only found in express statements and examples, but also in inferences that we may draw from these express statements and examples.

Let us apply what we have learned to a couple of issues we deal with today.

The first one is in Acts 2:38. Peter said to Jews who wanted to know what to do, *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*  There are some people who contend that the baptism that is commanded in this passage is not water baptism, but Holy Spirit baptism. It is true that water is not specifically stated in the verse, but Peter says “be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.” How can we conclude that it is water baptism? What is baptism “in the name of Jesus Christ”? Let us turn to Acts 10. Peter begins to preach to Cornelius and those in his house. These people are Gentiles. As Peter began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on those who heard the word, to prove to the Jews that Gentiles could be saved through Christ as the Jews. Peter then said, *“‘Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord….”* (Acts 10:47-48a) Notice, baptism *“in the name of the Lord”* is water baptism. This is the same baptism that Peter commanded the Jews in Acts 2:38, baptism *“in the name of Jesus Christ.”* And furthermore, Holy Spirit baptism is never commanded in Scripture. It is a promise. But baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, baptism in the name of the Lord is commanded and it is commanded for the remission of sins. That is water baptism.

Why do Christians meet on the first day of every week? There is no express statement in Scripture commanding us to meet on every first day of the week. But I believe that we can necessarily conclude from express statements and examples that assembling on the first day of every week was a part of apostolic instruction. In 1 Cor. 16:1-2 Paul instructed the church in Corinth (and he gave the same instructions to the churches in Galatia), *“On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.”* Now, the fact that they were commanded to give on the first day of the week “that there be no collections” when Paul came, implies that they put their funds into a collection of funds on the first day of the week. This implies they assembled on the first day of the week. The New American Standard version says they were to do this on the first day of every week, and the Greek text bears that out. Acts 20:7 says, *“Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.”* This is an example of the disciples in Troas coming together on the first day of the week specifically for the purpose to break bread (that is, to partake of the Lord’s Supper). It is evident that the early churches assembled on the first day of every week, and this was according to apostolic instruction.

In drawing these conclusions we are using what we normally use in interpreting human language: express statements, examples and necessary conclusions.

We want to talk more about how to interpret the Bible next week. We hope you will join us then.

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