

## Divine Authority

Lesson 4

Four Ways of Establishing Divine Authority

## What We Have Learned In The Previous Lesson

Jesus is the only source of authority today  
He has been made Prophet, King and Head of His church

He has communicated His will through the New Testament

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to guide inspired men into all truth and give them miraculous powers to confirm the truth

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## What We Have Learned In The Previous Lesson

We can read, understand and obey the truth of the New Testament

New Testament is final and complete revelation of God to humanity

To add or subtract from it is to go beyond the authority of Christ

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## Introduction

- Most churches of Christ claim they follow the New Testament as their only source of authority
- Many churches of Christ financially support colleges and other human institutions while others do not
- Churches act differently because they hold different attitudes toward and understandings of the New Testament

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## Introduction

- If we fail to correctly understand the New Testament, we will be following that which is not authorized
- In these next three lessons, we will examine closely the reasoning behind why we do the things we do in our work and worship as a local church
- As His disciples, we seek to learn so that we may also be able to teach others what the Word says

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## Introduction

Mat 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Mat 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

Mat 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

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## Introduction

2Ti 2:2 The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

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## Purposes of This Lesson

- Understand, identify and apply four ways in which the Lord has communicated His authority in the New Testament
- Distinguish what is authorized from what is not authorized and why this is so
- Understand why we do things as a local church

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## Four Ways of Establishing Divine Authority

Direct commands

Direct statements

Approved examples

Necessary inferences

Acts 15 – applying these four kinds of authority

Generic and specific authority

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## Direct Commands

Imperatives statements that either tell us what we must do or what we must not do

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## Direct Commands

- They can be either positive or negative
- They are probably the most familiar form of communicating authority
- They are found throughout the Bible
- But, we focus on the New Testament, our source of authority today

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## Example 1 - Direct Commands

Eph 4:31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

Eph 4:32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

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## Example 2 - Direct Commands

Col 3:9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices,

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## Example 3 - Direct Commands

Act 17:30 "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent,

Act 17:31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

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## Direct Statements

Statements of truth that are not commands but reveal truth we should believe and obey

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## Direct Statements

- These statements can take the form of promises we are to believe
- They can be stated as facts we are to believe
- These statements can also reveal facts that show patterns of behavior we should follow

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## Example 1 - Direct Statements

Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Joh 1:2 He was in the beginning with God.

Joh 1:3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

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## Example 1 - Direct Statements

Joh 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

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## Example 2 - Direct Statements

Col 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

Col 1:16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him.

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## Example 2 - Direct Statements

Col 1:17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Col 1:18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

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## Example 3 - Direct Statements

1Co 15:1 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand,

1Co 15:2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

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## Example 3 - Direct Statements

1Co 15:3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 1Co 15:4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

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## Example 3 - Direct Statements

1Co 15:5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

1Co 15:6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;

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## Example 3 - Direct Statements

1Co 15:7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;

1Co 15:8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

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## Approved Examples

Actions approved by inspired men for future generations to follow

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## Example 1 – Approved Examples

Partake of Lord's Supper on first day of week

Act 20:7 On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.

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## Example 2 – Approved Examples

Appointing elders in every local church

Act 14:23 When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

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## Example 3 – Approved Examples

Preachers have right to marry

1Co 9:5 Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?

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## Necessary Inferences

Conclusions which we must infer from the facts given in scriptures

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## Necessary Inferences

- These necessary conclusions provide information that is not directly given to us
- But, from the information provided to us, when we put it all together, this is the only reasonable conclusion we can make
- These conclusions are necessary for us to understand the truth God has given to us

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## Example 1 - Necessary Inferences

Partake of Lord's supper every first day of week

Act 20:7 On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.

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## Example 2 - Necessary Inferences

Unleavened bread must be used in Lord's supper

1Co 11:23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread;

1Co 11:24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

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## Example 2 - Necessary Inferences

Unleavened bread must be used in Lord's supper

1Co 11:25 In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

1Co 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

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## Example 2 - Necessary Inferences

Unleavened bread must be used in Lord's supper

Mat 26:17 Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?"

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## Example 2 - Necessary Inferences

Unleavened bread must be used in Lord's supper

Mat 26:18 And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is near; I am to keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.'""

Mat 26:19 The disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover.

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## Example 2 - Necessary Inferences

Unleavened bread must be used in Lord's supper

Exo 12:18 'In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening.

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## Example 2 - Necessary Inferences

Unleavened bread must be used in Lord's supper

Exo 12:19 'Seven days there shall be no leaven found in your houses; for whoever eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is an alien or a native of the land.

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## Example 2 - Necessary Inferences

Unleavened bread must be used in Lord's supper

Exo 12:20 'You shall not eat anything leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.'

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## Example 3 - Necessary Inferences

Every local church autonomous, ruled by their own elders

Act 14:23 When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

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## Example 3 - Necessary Inferences

Every local church autonomous, ruled by their own elders

Act 20:28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

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## Example 3 - Necessary Inferences

Every local church autonomous, ruled by their own elders

1Pe 5:2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

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## Acts 15 - Divine Authority Applied

- Problem to be solved – must the Gentiles, or anyone, be circumcised and follow the Law of Moses to be saved?
- Problem solved by applying the four ways to establish Divine authority

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## Acts 15 – Problem Stated

Act 15:1 Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

Act 15:2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

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## Acts 15 – Necessary Inference Applied

Act 15:7 After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe.

Act 15:8 "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us;

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## Acts 15 – Necessary Inference Applied

Act 15:9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.

Act 15:10 "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

Act 15:11 "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

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## Acts 15 – Approved Example Applied

Act 15:13 After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me.

Act 15:14 "Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name.

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## Acts 15 – Direct Statement Applied

Act 15:15 "With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written,

Act 15:16 'AFTER THESE THINGS I will return, AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH HAS FALLEN, AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I WILL RESTORE IT,

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## Acts 15 – Direct Statement Applied

Act 15:17 SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,'

Act 15:18 SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS KNOWN FROM LONG AGO.

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## Acts 15 – Direct Command Applied

Act 15:28 "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials:

Act 15:29 that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well.

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## Generic And Specific Authority

- We have focused on the ways authority is expressed
- But now, we note these expressions can point to either generic or specific authority
- We look at the definitions and examples

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## Generic And Specific Authority

Generic authority – general in nature giving us a wide variety of specific options we can take to do what is authorized

Specific authority – specific in nature where we are limited to following only the specific action that is authorized

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## Example 1 – Generic Authority

Authorized to go and make disciples but not specifically told how to go

Mat 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

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## Example 2 – Generic Authority

Authorized to teach disciples all things but methods of teaching not specified

Mat 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

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## Example 3 – Generic Authority

Authorized to sing types of songs but no specific song is specified

Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

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## Example 1 – Specific Authority

Authorized to preach only the gospel to the world

Mar 16:15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

Mar 16:16 "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

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## Example 2 – Specific Authority

Authorized to contribute money only on first day of week

1Co 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also.

1Co 16:2 On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.

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## Example 3 – Specific Authority

Authorized only to sing in worship and not to play instruments

Eph 5:19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

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## Generic And Specific Authority

- If God has generally authorized something, we should not limit ourselves to specifics
- If God has specifically authorized something, we should not widen His authority to include things not specified

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## What We Have Learned In This Lesson

Four ways of establishing Divine authority

Direct commands

Direct statements

Approved examples

Necessary inferences

Acts 15 – applying these four kinds of authority

Generic and specific authority

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## What We Have Learned In This Lesson

- There are four ways of establishing Divine authority
- They can be expressed generally or specifically
- In coming lessons, we will seek to show what we are authorized to do as a local church and how many churches of Christ have departed from Divine authority in following the practices of denominations and the world

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## Divine Authority

### Lesson 4 - Four Ways of Establishing Divine Authority

#### Various passages and material from Lesson 4 outline

For each of the following questions, please circle the letter by the correct answer. Each Choice represents one of the ways Divine authority has been established. Find the way that each belief or practice is authorized by the New Testament.

1. Independence and autonomy (self-rule) of each local church.

- A. Direct command.
- B. Direct statement.
- C. Approved example.
- D. Necessary inference.

2. We are to forgive each other.

- A. Direct command.
- B. Direct statement.
- C. Approved Example.
- D. Necessary Inference.

3. Jesus is responsible for maintaining the universe.

- A. Direct command.
- B. Direct statement.
- C. Approved example.
- D. Necessary inference.

4. We are not to lie.
  - A. Direct command.
  - B. Direct statement.
  - C. Approved example.
  - D. Necessary inference.
  
5. We are to partake of the Lord's supper on the first day of the week.
  - A. Direct command.
  - B. Direct statement.
  - C. Approved example.
  - D. Necessary inference.
  
6. Appointing of elders in every local church.
  - A. Direct command.
  - B. Direct statement.
  - C. Approved example.
  - D. Necessary inference.
  
7. We are to partake of the Lord's supper every first day of the week.
  - A. Direct command.
  - B. Direct statement.
  - C. Approved example.

- D. Necessary inference.
8. A preacher has a right to marry a wife.
- A. Direct command.
  - B. Direct statement.
  - C. Approved example.
  - D. Necessary inference.
9. Use unleavened bread as part of the Lord's supper.
- A. Direct command.
  - B. Direct statement.
  - C. Approved example.
  - D. Necessary inference.

For each statement, circle True or False.

- |      |       |    |   |
|------|-------|----|---|
| True | False | 1. | We are free to use a number of ways to accomplish what is generally authorized.   |
| True | False | 2. | Contributing money on the first day of the week is an example of generic authority.   |
| True | False | 3. | Direct statements are the same as direct commands.  |
| True | False | 4. | Since the Lord did not specify the ways in which we should go to all nations, we are free to choose whatever ways are best. |
| True | False | 5. | We are only given positive examples in the New Testament from which we can learn.   |

True      False    6.    All direct commands in the New Testament are negatively stated.

True      False    7.    An approved example was to apply to all local churches.

For each question, please provide statements that clearly answer each question.

1.    Please list and briefly explain the four ways in which Divine authority is established.
2.    Are we to follow all examples we see in the New Testament? Please explain why or why not.
3.    From Acts 15, please show how each of the four expressions of Divine authority are demonstrated.
4.    Please explain generic and specific authority and tell how they differ from one another.
5.    What must we seek to avoid as we apply generic and specific authority?
6.    Please provide one example of generic and specific authority.
7.    What is generally specified in Col. 3:16?
8.    Please explain why Eph. 5:19 does not authorize instrumental music in worship.