

AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

Lesson 1: Introduction

Teacher: John M. Brown, Flatwoods church of Christ, Fall Quarter 2007

INTRODUCTION:

- A. **“Authority”** means *the right to command or the right act; jurisdiction; power; prerogative, control; rule – the power or right to give commands, enforce obedience, take action, or make final binding decisions; the power to authorize or approve; authoritative.*
- B. The subject of authority is vital to New Testament Christianity!
1. It determines how we approach God in doctrine, worship, attitude, and service.
 2. It directly relates to *“rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2 Timothy 2:15).
 3. It decides vital questions relating to our religious teaching and practice.
 4. It makes the churches of Christ unique in the religious world.
- C. The subject of authority relates to every aspect of life (not just religion):
1. Suppose people wanted to MEASURE something – would it be possible if everyone’s standard of measurement was different? Would any kind of agreement be reached?
 2. Suppose people wanted to WEIGH something – could it be done if everyone had his own scale, and all these scales were not in agreement concerning what a pound was?
 3. Suppose in TRAVELLING, there were no uniform rules, laws, and regulations on the highways – what would be the result?
 4. Suppose in BUSINESS, in every department or grocery store every clerk and customer had the right to place whatever prices they desired on items for sale, what would happen to business in America?
 5. Suppose in SPORTS, two opposing teams played, but there were not set agreements regarding any rules – could such a game be played?
 6. Suppose in MEDICINE, no two could agree what composed the medicine in a prescription – could doctors, pharmacists, or patients be satisfied or aided?
 7. Suppose in MATHEMATICS, there were no standards or absolutes, could any agreement ever be reached?
 8. TRUTH is, of necessity, narrow and restrictive, in every area of life! (John 8:31-32; Matthew 7:13-14).

D. Differing appeals to different authorities in religion create confusion:

1. The Roman Catholics says “the church” is the final authority.
2. Others appeal to various authorities: traditions, conventions, church officials, etc.
3. The churches of Christ appeal to Scripture and Scripture only.

E. WHO, or WHAT, should be our authority in religion?

1. Majority rule, convention, vote of the majority? (see Matthew 7:13-14).
2. Preacher, president, superintendent? (see Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4; Colossians 1:18).
3. Tradition, manual, creed, discipline? (see Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7-9).
4. One’s own conscience? (see Proverbs 14:23; Jeremiah 10:23).
5. The theories, ideas, and opinions of men? (see 1 Peter 4:11; Matthew 7:21-23).

F. AUTHORITY misunderstood and abused:

1. Because there are different authorities appealed to in religion, it is no wonder there is division, denominationalism, and differences among even sincere people.
2. Different authorities produce differing teachings and practices, which is contrary to the teaching of our Lord and His apostles (see John 17:20-21; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:13; Philippians 3:16).

G. The need for authority in religion: **MATTHEW 21:23-27** (see also LUKE 20:1-8).

1. Every religious teaching and practice either originated from God or from men.
2. For illustrations, see Matthew 16:13-18 and Colossians 2:6-9.

G. The great significance of this matter:

1. The Bible warns about “false” doctrine and teaching (Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:28-29; Galatians 1:6-9; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Peter 2:1-3).
2. The Bible teaches we must adhere to the doctrine of Jesus Christ (2 John 9-11).

QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION:

1. What is meant by “authority”?
2. How does authority relate to our religious teaching and practice?
3. How is “authority” important in other areas of life?
4. How does one’s view of authority affect one’s religious practice?
5. What are some different authorities to which people appeal in religion?

AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

Lesson 2: God's Authority & God's Word

Teacher: John M. Brown, Flatwoods church of Christ, Fall Quarter 2007

INTRODUCTION:

- A. We have seen how important the subject of religious authority is: *it directly determines everything we believe and practice in religion.*
- B. Consider God's authority and God's Word.

I. ALL INHERENT AUTHORITY BELONGS TO GOD THE FATHER

- A. God is *Creator, Ruler, Sovereign, King* – and as such has all power, majesty, rule, authority, sovereignty, might, and dominion.
- B. Consider the following passages:
 - 1. God is Creator: Genesis 1-3; Acts 17:22-24, 30-31
 - 2. God is all powerful: Deuteronomy 3:24; 1 Chronicles 29:12; Psalm 89:6-11
 - 3. God rules over all kingdoms: 2 Chronicles 20:6; Psalm 24:10; Daniel 2:20-22
 - 4. God is great: Psalm 77:13-14
 - 5. God has all dominion: Psalm 104
 - 6. God is the only God: Isaiah 44:6-8
 - 7. God has eternal power which man should recognize: Romans 1:18-23

II. GOD THE FATHER GAVE ALL AUTHORITY TO JESUS CHRIST

- A. Jesus Christ has all authority: Matthew 7:29; Mark 1:27; John 5:27
- B. Reasons the Father gave the Son all authority:
 - 1. Christ pleased the Father: Matthew 3:17; John 6:29, 54; 2 Peter 1:17
 - 2. Christ has all power (authority) in heaven and in earth: *Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 4:7-12; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 3:17*
 - 3. Christ is the One by Whom the Father speaks: *Hebrews 1:1-2; Matthew 17:1-5; John 7:16-17; 8:13-19, 28; 12:49-50*
 - 4. Christ is Head over all things to the church: *Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23; Colossians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2; James 4:13; 1 Peter 3:22*
 - 5. Christ is the Word of God – He is Deity: *John 1:1ff; 8:24, 58; 10:30; 14:9; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Colossians 2:9; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:8*

6. Christ's Word that makes men free from sin: *John 8:31-36; 6:63, 67-68*
7. Christ's Word is eternal, and will judge mankind: *John 12:48; Matthew 24:35; 7:24-27; 2 Corinthians 5:10*

III. CHRIST DELEGATED AUTHORITY TO THE APOSTLES

A. Study Matthew 10:1, 19-20; Luke 21:15; 12:12

B. Christ promised the apostles the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

1. John 14:25-26

- a. The Holy Spirit would teach them all things.
- b. The Holy Spirit would bring to their remembrance all that Jesus said.

2. John 16:12-13

- a. The Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth.
- b. The Holy Spirit would show them things to come.

C. The APOSTLES (and PROPHETS) acknowledged this revelation and inspiration.

1. Ephesians 3:3-5

2. 1 Corinthians 2:9-13

3. 1 Corinthians 14:37

4. Galatians 1:11-12

5. 2 Peter 3:16

6. 1 John 4:6

D. What the apostles wrote was "given by inspiration":

1. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3; Galatians 1:6-9

2. Thus, the *WORD OF GOD*, given by *INSPIRATION OF GOD*, has the very *AUTHORITY OF GOD*

GOD → CHRIST → APOSTLES & PROPHETS → SCRIPTURE (Word of God)

AUTHORITY IN RELIGION
Lesson 3: Authority – From Heaven or From Men?

Teacher: John M. Brown, Flatwoods church of Christ, Fall Quarter 2007

INTRODUCTION:

- A. The importance of authority in religion: this determines our belief and practice.
- B. Scripture is given by inspiration of God – it carries the authority of God, for it is the “voice” of God, the revelation of the mind and will of God to man.

I. THE QUESTION: “From Heaven or of men?”

A. Matthew 21:23-27

- 1. “By what authority does thou these things...?”
- 2. The baptism of John: *from heaven or of men?*

B. SOME EXAMPLES:

1. MATTHEW 16:13-18

FROM GOD

“Thou art the Christ,
the Son of the living God”

FROM MEN

John the Baptist
Elijah
Jeremiah
one of the prophets

2. MATTHEW 15:1-20

FROM GOD

“Honor thy father and mother”

FROM MEN

Traditions
Doctrines and commandments

3. GALATIANS 1:6-9

FROM GOD

Gospel of Christ

FROM MEN

“another gospel”

II. FROM HEAVEN OR MEN: AUTHORITY

A. FROM GOD

1. Inspiration: 2 Timothy 3:16-17
2. Revelation: 1 Corinthians 2:9-13
3. Truth: Matthew 16:13-18
4. Authority: Matthew 21:23-27
5. The will of the Father in heaven: Matthew 7:21-23

B. FROM MEN

1. Human reason: Jeremiah 10:23
2. Human philosophy: Colossians 2:6-9
3. Traditions of men: Matthew 15:1-9
4. Works of men: Matthew 7:21-23
5. Ways that seem right: Proverbs 16:25

AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

Lesson 4: Authority – The Voice of Scripture is the Voice of God

Teacher: John M. Brown, Flatwoods church of Christ, Fall Quarter 2007

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Regarding any religious doctrine or practice, we must HEAR GOD, for He has all authority.
- B. To hear God, we must hear His Word – for, the voice of Scripture is the Voice of God.

I. SCRIPTURE IS THE WORD OF GOD

- A. Proof that the words of Scripture are the Words of God:

1. Exodus 20:1, And God spake all these words
2. Exodus 24:4-7 (read)
3. Exodus 34:27, And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words have I made a covenant with thee and with Israel.
4. Deuteronomy 5:22
5. 2 Samuel 23:1-2, Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue, (compare Mark 12:36 & Acts 1:16).
6. Matthew 22:31-32 (quote from Exodus 3:6).
7. John 8:47, He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.
8. Acts 3:18, But those things, which God before shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.
9. Romans 16:25-26
10. 1 Corinthians 2:10-13
11. Galatians 1:11-12

- B. Thus, the words of Scripture are the words of God; the teaching of Scripture is the teaching of God; the voice of Scripture is the voice of God.

II. THE VOICE OF SCRIPTURE AS THE VOICE OF GOD

Note the following comparisons:

A. Exodus 9:13-16 & Romans 9:17

B. Genesis 12:1-3 & Galatians 3:8

C. Zechariah 12:1-10 & John 19:37

D. Isaiah 28:16 & Romans 10:11

CONCLUSION:

- A. When we hear the Scripture, we hear God speak.
- B. To hear God, give careful heed to His words.
- C. Note Exodus 3:2-6
- D. Note Isaiah 66:2

<p>AUTHORITY IN RELIGION <i>Lesson 5: Authority – Respecting God’s Pattern</i></p>

Teacher: John M. Brown, Flatwoods church of Christ, Fall Quarter 2007

INTRODUCTION:

- A. We have seen that to hear God it is necessary to hear His Word: it is the revelation of His will.
- B. In God’s Word, He has given us a pattern to follow, and it is essential that we follow God’s pattern.

I. GOD’S PATTERN

- A. Example: Hebrews 8:1-5
- B. New Testament teaching:
 - 1. 2 Timothy 1:13 – “form” = pattern, rule.
 - 2. 1 Corinthians 1:10
 - 3. Romans 6:17-18
- C. God has a pattern:
 - 1. For becoming a Christian.
 - 2. For the organization of the church.
 - 3. For congregational worship.
 - 4. For the work of the church.
 - 5. For righteous living.

II. GOD’S PATTERN = “THE FAITH”

- A. “The faith” means NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY
 - 1. The faith can be preached: Galatians 1:23
 - 2. The faith can be heard: Acts 24:24
 - 3. The faith can be obeyed: Acts 6:17
 - 4. The faith can be defended: Philippians 1:27
 - 5. The faith can be contended for: Jude 3

B. There is “one faith” – Ephesians 4:5

1. The “one faith” is the system of New Testament Christianity.
2. We must come to the unity of “the faith”: Ephesians 4:13
3. It is the words of the apostles by which we believe in Jesus: John 17:20-21

C. All must obey the same thing!

1. Timothy was to bring the Corinthians to the knowledge of Paul’s ways which were Christ, which Paul taught the same way in every church: 1 Corinthians 4:17
2. Paul wrote the Lord’s words: 1 Corinthians 14:37
3. Purification comes from obeying the truth: 1 Peter 1:22

CONCLUSION:

A. God has a pattern (form, standard, rule, guide) for New Testament Christianity!

B. If there is no pattern:

1. Then no one could know what constitutes true Christianity;
2. Then no one could know what was necessary to pleasing God;
3. Then it would be impossible to know or obey God’s will, or ever achieve any kind of religious unity or fellowship.

C. But, we can know what we must do to please God, because God has made it plain!

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Lesson 6: Respecting the Silence of God

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INTRODUCTION:

- A. It is necessary to obey God's voice: this is hearing God's Word.
- B. But we shall see it is also necessary to respect God's silence!

I. THE STRICTNESS OF GOD'S LAW

A. God has always commanded man to not add to His words, nor take from His words.

1. *Proverbs 30:5-6*
2. *Deuteronomy 4:1-2*
3. *Deuteronomy 5:28-29*
4. *Deuteronomy 12:32*
5. *Joshua 1:7*
6. *Joshua 23:6*
7. *Revelation 22:18-19*

B. This principle illustrated:

1. *Jeremiah 19:1-5*
2. *Hebrews 1:5*
3. *Hebrews 7:14*
4. *2 John 9-11*

II. WE MUST UNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPLE OF RESPECTING SILENCE

A. In the **natural realm:**

1. **COOKING:** If a recipe calls for "four eggs," that *excludes* two eggs or twelve eggs.
2. **INVITATION:** If a day and time is specified on an invitation, other days and times are *excluded*.

3. **TELEPHONE NUMBER:** When I give the seven digits that constitute my telephone number (“836-7373”), all other seven-digit combinations are excluded.
4. **FILLING A PRESCRIPTION:** When a doctor writes a prescription for a certain medicine, the pharmacist knows all other medicines not called for are excluded.

B. In the religious realm:

1. NOAH & THE ARK

- a. God specified the woods, the size, the function, etc.
- b. All other woods or sizes or uses became excluded!

2. THE LORD’S SUPPER

- a. God specified unleavened bread and fruit of the vine on the first day of the week
- b. All other elements or days are thereby excluded.

3. BAPTISM

- a. God specified baptism by immersion for the purpose of the remission of sins.
- b. All other modes (“sprinkling, pouring”) or purposes are excluded.

4. SINGING

- a. God specified that in the worship of the church, all were to sing and make melody in the heart unto the Lord.
- b. Playing, tooting, strumming, blowing, banging, and clapping are excluded.

C. Respecting God’s **VOICE** necessitates respecting God’s **SILENCE** as well.

1. Things not authorized by the Word of God are forbidden by not being commanded or authorized, forbidden because we are not to add to His Word.
2. **COMMANDS forbid ADDITIONS:**
 - a. The command to offer Isaac forbids offering Ishmael (Genesis 22:2).
 - b. The command to **SPEAK** to the rock forbids **SMITING** it (Numbers 20:7-12).
 - c. The command to offer a **LAMB** in the Passover forbids a **PIG** (Exodus 12).
 - d. The command to use **UNLEAVENED BREAD & FRUIT OF THE VINE** in the Lord’s Supper forbids **MASHED POTATOES & COCA-COLA** (Luke 22:18-20).
 - e. The command for the church to **SING** in worship forbids playing, plucking, strumming, etc.

CONCLUSION:

- A. Respecting God’s **VOICE** means doing what He has said.
- B. Respecting God’s **SILENCE** means not going beyond what He has said.
- C. To be silent where God has spoken is to take away from His Word; to speak where God is silent is to add to His Word.
- D. *“Speak where the Bible speaks, and be silent where the Bible is silent.”*

AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

Lesson 7: The Strictness of God's Law

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INTRODUCTION:

- A. We have seen that the Bible, God's revelation, is to be our complete and sole authority in religion (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- B. We have also seen that we must respect God's voice (1 Peter 4:11) and we must respect God's silence as well (Proverbs 30:5-6): *man has never had the right to take liberties with God's Word, by adding to, taking from, substituting, or changing it in any way.*
- C. God clearly expects that His Word be strictly adhered to by those who would please Him.

I. THE STRICTNESS OF GOD'S LAW TAUGHT

- A. God's Law has been given, and to it we must diligently adhere and obey.

- 1. Hebrews 1:1-2
- 2. Acts 3:22-23
- 3. 1 Corinthians 2:
- 4. Hebrews 10:28-29

- B. It is the truth that saves:

- 1. Psalm 119:142
- 2. John 8:31-32

- C. Anything contrary to truth must be rejected:

- 1. Psalm 119:104
- 2. Proverbs 28:26
- 3. Galatians 1:6-9
- 4. 2 John 9-11

II. THE STRICTNESS OF GOD'S LAW ILLUSTRATED:

- A. The strictness of God's Law is seen in many examples and illustrations (Romans 15:4):

- 1. Cain & Abel: Genesis 4
- 2. "Strange Fire": Leviticus 10:1-3
- 3. Saul: 1 Samuel 28
- 4. Uzzah: 2 Samuel 6

- B. Can we take liberties with God's teachings?

III. THE STRICTNESS OF GOD'S LAW & AUTHORITY:

A. It is easy to see what is authorized, and what is not:

AUTHORIZED:

1. NOAH: make ark Genesis 6:14
2. ABRAHAM: offer Isaac Genesis 22
3. JEW: keep the Sabbath Exodus 20:8
4. NAAMAN: wash in Jordan seven times
2 Kings 5
5. LEVI: priesthood Hebrews 7:14
6. CHRIST: Hebrews 1:5

UNAUTHORIZED:

1. Methuselah
2. Servant
3. Gentiles
4. Naaman's servant; 3 times
5. Judah
6. Gabriel

B. So, the question: *authorized by God, or men?* (see Matthew 21:23-25).

C. Some things that, though not explicitly forbidden, have no Bible authority:

1. Burning incense in worship.
2. Praying to Mary or the saints.
3. Sprinkling for baptism.
4. Baptizing infants.
5. Having biscuits and gravy in the Lord's Supper.
6. Using rosary beads to pray.
7. Dancing as worship.
8. Use of holy water.
9. Cardinals and popes.
10. Women elders in the church.

AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

Lesson 8: Establishing Bible Authority

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INTRODUCTION:

A. Remember these principles:

1. God the Father has all authority, and He has delegated all authority to His Son.
2. The Son gave authority to the apostles, who were inspired by the Holy Spirit.
3. By inspiration, they received and wrote the revelation of God's mind and will.
4. Thus, God's Word has all authority: the voice of Scripture is the voice of God!

B. The question before us: *How do we determine (establish) if a practice is authorized by the Word of God?*

I. BY COMMAND:

A. If God commands something, then obviously that something is authorized

B. Some illustrations:

1. Noah was commanded by God to build the Ark: Genesis 6
2. Jesus commanded that His Gospel be preached: Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16.
3. Jesus and His apostles commanded that the Lord's Supper be observed: Matthew 26:26-28; 1 Corinthians 11
4. God commands all men everywhere to repent: Acts 17:30

II. BY APPROVED APOSTOLIC EXAMPLE:

A. By "approved," we mean those things done in Scripture which are examples for us to imitate.

B. By "apostolic," we mean that which was taught, and thus practiced, by the apostles who were guided into all truth (John 14:25-26; 16:12-13; Ephesians 3:3-5).

C. Some illustrations:

1. The disciples broke bread on the 1st day of the week: Acts 20:7.
2. The disciples continued steadfastly: Acts 2:42
3. Three thousand on the day of Pentecost repented and were baptized: Acts 2:38
4. All other apostolic instructions and examples.

III. BY NECESSARY INFERENCE:

A. By "necessary inference," we mean that which is positively and decidedly implied by the facts of the matter (inference or implication which is demanded).

B. Some illustrations:

1. It is necessarily inferred that the people on the day of Pentecost who were baptized believed (compare Acts 2:38 with John 8:24; Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6), though not specifically stated.
2. It is necessarily inferred that in his conversion Paul repented (Acts 9, 22, 26), though it is not specifically stated.
3. It is necessarily inferred that the disciples broke bread upon every first day of the week (compare Acts 20:7 and 2:42 with Exodus 20:28).

IV. BY EXPEDIENCY:

A. By expediency, we mean that which is necessary or helpful to carry out a command, example, or necessary inference as we seek to carry out God's will; it is that which enables us to fulfill God's will without adding to it or changing it in any way; an expediency in an aid.

B. Some illustrations:

1. **“GO”** – Matthew 28:19 (notice the how and where are not specified).
Walk, ride, fly, sail.
2. **“TEACH”** – Matthew 28:19-20 (notice the how and where are not specified).
Private, public, classroom, home, street corner, chalkboard, photographed outline, etc.
3. **“ASSEMBLE”** – Hebrews 10:25
Home, rented hall, yard, church-owned building.
4. **“SING”** – Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16
With a book or without a book; by memory; four-part harmony or monotone.
5. **“BAPTIZE”** – Acts 2:38
River, lake, pond, stream, baptistery.

C. An explanation:

1. Note that when each of the above is done, just the thing specified is done – nothing more and nothing less.
2. An expedient (aid) never adds to the command of God, but merely aids one in carrying out the command.
3. Anything that adds to God's command is not an aid, but an addition, which is prohibited (Proverbs 30:5-6).

AUTHORITY IN RELIGION
Lesson 9: Establishing Bible Authority – An Example

Teacher: John M. Brown, Flatwoods church of Christ, Fall Quarter 2007

INTRODUCTION:

- A. We have said that Bible authority may be established by command, example, necessary inference, and expediency.
- B. Let us note a Biblical example of establishing Bible authority – and example of brethren DETERMINING THE WILL OF GOD – a wonderful example of a matter being raised, discussed, and resolved, according to God’s will.
- C. Religious unity is dependent upon people together arriving at a correct understanding of God’s will, and uniting upon that.

TEXT: Acts 15

I. THE PROBLEM: Acts 15:1-6

- A. The question before the brethren was whether Gentiles could be accepted.
- B. For the background, see Acts 11:19-26.
- C. The discussion here was not legislative in nature.
 - 1. The purpose was not to gather to decide among themselves what to do.
 - 2. Rather, the purpose was to gather to determine *what God’s will already was* about the matter at hand.

II. THE FIRST SPEECH – PETER: Acts 15:7-11

- A. Peter appeals to the conversion of Cornelius and his household as evidence that circumcision and keeping the Law of Moses was not bound upon Gentiles.
- B. Peter came to realize the gospel was for Gentiles a series of four supernatural events:
 - 1. The vision of the angel to Cornelius, 10:3-8.
 - 2. The vision of Peter, 10:9-16
 - 3. The Spirit telling Peter to go with Cornelius’ messengers, 10:19-20
 - 4. The giving of the Holy Spirit, 10:44-46

C. No direct command was ever given to Peter to preach to Cornelius – instead, he **NECESSARILY INFERRED** that it was God’s plan to preach to the Gentiles (note 10:2} 34-35, 47-48; 11:15-18).

D. Peter’s line of argumentation in Acts 15:7-11

1. God gave the Gentiles the gospel, v. 7.
2. God gave the Gentiles the same Spirit, v. 8
3. God gave the Gentiles the same cleansing, v. 9.
4. His conclusion: the unbearable yoke of the Law must not be placed upon them, v 10-11.

III. THE SECOND SPEECH – PAUL & BARNABAS: Acts 15:12

A. Paul and Barnabas what God had done among the Gentiles.

B. The background is Acts 13:38-48; 14:8, 14-18, 27.

C. Paul and Barnabas’ emphasis is on what God had done among them – their **APOSTOLIC EXAMPLE**.

IV. THE THIRD SPEECH – JAMES: Acts 15:13-19

A. James appeals to a **DIRECT STATEMENT** from the Old Testament (vv. 16-17 – see Amos 9:11-12).

B. James recognized that preaching to the Gentiles was the fulfillment of what God has **COMMANDED** according to His eternal purpose.

C. His conclusion: verse 19.

CONCLUSION:

A. Through **DIRECT COMMAND**, **APOSTOLIC EXAMPLE**, and **NECESSARY INFERENCE**, the 1st century brethren arrived at an understanding of God’s will (verse 25).

B. Those who submitted to God’s will (His authority) were unified!