

WORLD VIDEO BIBLE SCHOOL

Fundamentals of the Faith

Charlie DiPalma

LESSON #5 — ALTERNATIVES TO ACCEPTING THE BIBLE AS THE STANDARD OF AUTHORITY

And that brings us to the fourth major point in our study on the subject of the authority and inspiration of the Bible. And that is: What alternatives are there to accepting the Bible as the standard of authority? Are there alternatives? Yes, there are. There are alternatives. And we want to study some about what God says about those alternatives. Let's just look at several. One is, the traditions and customs of men, traditions and customs of men. Just look out into the denominational world today. Ask them for a biblical reason for many of their customs and traditions. They can't give them because there are none. There are no biblical reasons for them.

Let me give you a couple of examples. Infant baptism, practiced widely in the religious world, the baptizing of babies. That's never found in the New Testament of Christ or the Old Testament. It's not authorized by the word of God. Babies can't meet the conditions that must be met before one is baptized, and yet it happens. That's a tradition and custom of man. What about the Lord's Supper? Some practice it or follow the Lord's Supper, once a month, some once a quarter, some once a year. But the Bible says, "Do it every first day of the week." We'll study that in a future lesson, Lord willing. So there's the difference. There's the traditions of men, and the customs of men, and the Word of God. What about the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship of God? The Bible says, "Sing." Every verse in the New Testament that refers to our music and worship of God says, "Sing." That's all we have authority from God to do. And we cannot add the mechanical instrument of music without sinning against God.

So men have their customs and traditions. But the Bible says differently. We need to compare what men are doing today where they can't justify what they're doing from the Bible, with the attitude of the Bereans that we referred to earlier. In Acts 17, verse 11, they searched the scriptures daily, to determine whether those things were so. They knew the standard of authority is the Bible, not the traditions and customs of men. So they went to the Bible, to find out what they could and couldn't do.

Well, what was Jesus' attitude toward the traditions and customs of men? Let's go to a passage of scripture where we will see that very clearly. This is found in Mark the seventh chapter, verses 7 through 9. Mark 7, verses 7 through 9, Jesus said, "And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men, the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do. And he said to them, all too well. You reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition." That's a frightening passage of scripture. The Lord told those people, and us today, when we worship according to the doctrines and commandments of

men, our worship is vain. It's of no value. It's of no use to us, nor to the Lord. That's frightening and serious and sobering.

But let's look at the Apostle Paul's attitude towards the traditions and customs of men. This is found in the book of Colossians, in the New Testament. Chapter 2, verse 8. Colossians chapter 2, verse 8. He said, by God's inspiration, "Beware, lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ." So Paul said, "You Be careful, be on guard. Beware of men who come to you with their wise words, philosophy, and their deceit, and their traditions and customs, because they can rob you of your eternal reward." And that's serious.

What about the apostle Peter? In 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 18, we see his attitude towards the customs, and traditions of men. He said, "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver or gold from your aimless conduct, received by tradition, from your fathers." So Peter said, that these people had lived before their conversion, by their aimless vain conduct, and it was governed by the traditions that they received from their fathers.

What is the conclusion that we can draw from these and other passages of scripture on this subject? God doesn't accept the customs and traditions of men as a standard of authority, whenever they conflict with his standard, his word. So we can't use that as an acceptable standard of authority.

A second, alternative to the Word of God is man's common sense, or reasoning power. Common sense or reasoning power. Now God has given us a mind to think, and to use in such a way that we can reason. So we're not arguing against the use of common sense or reasoning power. What we're saying is: Should we use that as our standard of authority? Should we use our common sense and our reasoning power as our soul's standard of authority? And Lord willing, we will continue our study of that subject. We will answer that question by going to our safe standard, the word of God.

In this particular lesson, we're talking about the authority and the inspiration of the Bible. We began by asking the question, "What is our standard of authority?" We learned that authority is the right to command and enforce obedience. And we saw that the only Being who can command and enforce obedience of all people, is God. And that the father delegated that authority to His Son, Jesus the Christ. And that Jesus delegated that authority to His apostles and inspired prophets, and promised them power to execute that authority through the sending of the Holy Spirit, to guide them into all the truth. And we learned that the end result of that process was the Bible, which is the word of God. It's complete. It's all sufficient. And God tells us, "Do not add to, or take away from, that word."

We looked at the definition of inspired. Inspired means, "Breathed out of the mouth of God." So when we say the Bible is inspired, we mean, the Bible is the Word of God.

We've also studied some reasons for believing that the Bible is the Word of God. And in our last class, we began to look at: What are some alternatives to accepting the Bible as the standard of authority? We studied the traditions and customs of men, and recognized that Jesus said, that when we worship according to those doctrines and commandments of men,

our worship is vain. It's useless. It's of no value to us, or to God. So we reject the customs and traditions of men, as a standard of authority.

Today, we'd like to look at another alternative to accepting the Bible as the standard of authority. And that is, man's common sense, or his reasoning power. Common sense, or reasoning power.

Please understand that we're not saying, "Don't use common sense or reasoning power." God has given us those abilities to us. The question we want to answer is: "Should we use those as our standard of authority?" We'll go to the Bible to answer that question.

Let's look first in the book of Jeremiah, in the Old Testament, the 10th chapter, and verse 23. Jeremiah 10, verse 23. Here's what God said through his spokesman: "Oh, Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps." So God tells us that the way that we need to guide our lives is not in ourselves. It's not in us to direct our own steps. We need help. We need guidance from God. And the guidance that we need, He has revealed to us in His Word.

Another passage along this line is in Proverbs, the third chapter, verse 5 and 6. Let's read that. Proverbs 3, verse 5 and verse 6. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And he shall direct your paths." So God tells us that we need to trust in the Lord. And we don't need to lean solely upon our own understanding. Yes, we need to use our understanding ability, but don't lean solely upon us on it. But instead, we need to acknowledge God in all of our ways. How are we going to do that? We're going to acknowledge His will, as revealed to us in His Word. And as we do that, He will direct our paths, through His Word, which he's given to us.

And then a final passage on this subject. This one is found in the book of Isaiah. Isaiah chapter 55, verses 8 and 9. Isaiah 55, verse 8 and verse 9. Here God said through Isaiah, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts." So God tells us that his ways and his thoughts are not ours. His are higher than ours. And what we need to do is: we need to educate our ways and our thoughts, with God's ways and thoughts, as revealed in the Bible. We need to lift our level of thinking up to what God says in His Word. So when we look at passages like these, the conclusion we draw, is that man can't afford to rely solely upon his common sense, or reasoning power.

That brings us to another alternative to the Word of God, and that is, human feelings. Human feelings. Again, we are not saying that feelings are wrong. As we studied the scriptures, we see, for example, that Jesus wept (John 11, verse 35). And He was moved with compassion when He saw the crowds lost in their sins. Feelings are natural. But the question is: Are feelings to be used as our standard of authority?

Look at the denominational world today. Much of the denominational world is wrapped up in emotionalism. That is, allowing their feelings and their emotions to control them. You may have heard people say, "I've got a feeling in my heart that I wouldn't trade for 1,000 Bibles." I've heard that kind of statement. And the question is: Is that the way that God wants us to act and conduct our lives?

Let's look at a passage of scripture that we believe gives us God's answer to that question. This passage is in the book of Proverbs, in the 14th chapter, and verse 12. Proverbs 14, verse

12. Here the wise man, Solomon said, by the inspiration of God, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” Now notice what God said: there's a way that seems right. It feels good. It seems like I'm doing what is right. But what did God say the end of that way is? The end is the way of death. So we can be misled. We can be deceived by our emotions, by our feelings. We must control those emotions and those feelings with our mind, with our spirit. And that's what God wants us to do.

Another passage that is similar along these lines is found in the book of Matthew, in chapter 7, verse 21. Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father, Who is in heaven.” These people that Jesus is talking about, had a feeling in their heart that they were right. That they had the right to call upon God as Lord. But Jesus said, “Not everyone who does that will enter into heaven, but those who obey the Father.” So feelings are natural. Emotions are natural. But we must control them with our mind as the mind is educated by the word of God. So our conclusion, human feelings are not a reliable and safe guide, or standard.

What is our ultimate conclusion, then, concerning these alternatives to the Word of God as the standard of authority? Let's go to the book of Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes chapter 12, verse 13. Ecclesiastes 12, verse 13. Remember this was recorded by the wise man Solomon. Remember all that he had done in his life. He had great wisdom, great wealth, access to all kinds of pleasures. The kind of alternatives to the Word of God that we see in our world today. What was his conclusion? “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” There's the bottom line, if you will. There's the important point of our study in this section. We need to fear God. That is, we need to have a fear for Him because He can destroy both body and soul in hell (Matthew 10, verse 28). And we need to honor Him, respect Him, as our Creator and the One with Whom we must deal. And when we fear Him and love Him properly, we're going to keep His commandments. Not the doctrines and commandments of men. Not feelings and emotions. Not reasoning, power, or wisdom. But, keep His commandments, that's our whole duty. So, that is what God wants us to do. We must reject those alternatives to the Bible, the Word of God, as our safe and final standard of authority.

Now, we'd like to go back and look at a brief summary of what we've seen in Roman numeral four of our outline: some alternatives to accepting the Bible, the Word of God, as our standard of authority. First of all, we studied the customs and traditions of men. We found that we must reject those customs and traditions of men when they conflict with the Word of God. Secondly, we studied about man's common sense, and his reasoning power. Again, that must be rejected, and replaced by the word of God. And thirdly, we studied human feelings, and saw that those are natural, however, they must be educated by our mind, as educated by the word of God. And our conclusion, “Fear God and keep His commandments.” The Bible is the only and final standard of authority in the spiritual realm, which is acceptable to God. So we go to the Bible to answer the questions of life.