

THE BOOK, CHAPTER, & VERSE APPROACH TO CHRISTIANITY

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INTRODUCTION:

- A. If you're visiting with us, as well as if you are member of this church, you can probably see quickly that there are some differences between this church and other churches in this area – Why a difference?
1. The differences are the result of our goal – We want to do exactly what the Bible teaches!
 - a. We seek to follow it as a pattern not only in our own lives but also in the work and worship of this local church. We want to be exactly like the Christians & churches in the NT!
 - b. Who'd disagree with that concept? Most religious people would probably say this right!
But the differences arise as a result of how far you follow it... It's a matter of degree.
 2. Because of this pursuit people of God have been called "People of the Book" and "Walking Bibles" in times past – Some used these terms in commendation, some have used it derogatorily
 3. In the early 1800's in the U.S., (there's probably examples of this throughout time) people started trying to "restore" local churches back to being like what you read about in the New Testament:
 - a. During this time you men and women started questioning the denominational approach to Christianity, some beliefs that were commonplace, & the organization of churches
 - b. When they were discussing the Bible they'd use phrases like, "Where is the book, chapter, and verse for that?" – If none could be given the practice or belief was abandoned!
 - c. These men and women were not "church of Christ" people for the most part... Most were from Methodist, Baptist, & Presbyterian churches. They were just seeking the truth!
 4. Give a couple of examples of the attitudes that developed (Barton W. Stone & W.R. Officer)
- B. The "Book, Chapter, And Verse" concept was not just a concept of the 1800's and it is not just a concept for a certain religious group, it is a Bible concept. As we will see it is an approach to Christianity that anyone must take if they want to please God & it's simply the best approach one could take.

THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF THE BOOK, CHAPTER, AND VERSE APPROACH TO CHRISTIANITY

- A. The "Book, Chapter, And Verse" approach is the only approach which is acceptable to God:
1. This approach is one of the things Jesus emphasized in the Sermon on the Mount as being characteristic of one who would enter the kingdom of Heaven (**Matthew 7:21-23**)
 - a. This shows us that just saying we are doing it for the Lord doesn't make it acceptable to Him, but actually doing the will of the Father is what counts. How do we know what God's will is?
 - b. When this does imaginary scene likely take place? Likely the Day of Judgment... With that being the case, there's no reason to doubt that these people did these great things & were sincere!
 - c. Their problem was simply a matter of practicing lawlessness – In some way they had been acting outside the law of God, whether in moral issues or how they did their great religious acts
 2. What "book, chapter, and verse" is about is respecting and seeking the authority of God!
 - a. Authority in the Bible involves the ideas of "jurisdiction, liberty, power, right, strength" – It means, "The power to enforce laws, exact obedience, command, determine, or judge"
 - b. Consider passages which emphasize the need for authority (**2 John 9; Col 3:17; Matt 28:18, 20**)
 - c. Everyone who seeks to be a Christian surely recognizes God is in control, that Jesus is Lord of Lord and King of Kings, and we are to serve God! Doesn't that mean full submission the Lord?

- d. From the start to the end of the God has made it clear that He does not want people adding to or taking away from the instructions He has given (**Deut. 4:2; Prov 30:5-6; Rev 22:18-19**)
- 3. Notice some things the Lord says to and through Jeremiah (**Jeremiah 7:23-24; 8:7; 26:2**)
- 4. God has gone to great lengths to reveal His will to man... If He tells us what He wants, then only by doing that would we be trying to please the Lord! (**2 Tim 3:16-17**)
 - a. This is a revolutionary principle... Many don't stop to ask, "How does God want me to do this?" or "What does God want me to do?" Most often the question is: "What do most people like?"
 - b. If something seems to man to be a great thing to do in service to God, many assume God would be pleased with it, but that's just not right. The average person has never thought about this!
 - c. Simply put, if something is good we will read about it in God's word. If we cannot give a "book, chapter, and verse" for what we do, then we cannot confidently say that it is a "good work!"

B. The "Book, Chapter, And Verse" approach is the only approach which glorifies the Lord:

- 1. This was a lesson Nadab and Abihu learned a most difficult way when they failed to sacrifice to God according to His specific directions: (**Leviticus 10:1-2**)
 - a. To man this sounds like a harsh penalty. Perhaps Nadab and Abihu were trying to do something extra special to God we may think. But that doesn't matter... It was not authorized by God!
 - b. If anyone wants to say authority is a nit-picky thing, that emphasizing authority is majoring in minors, then they need to reread this story. Just ask Nadab & Abihu if it's a minor thing!
 - c. What was the problem with their sacrifice? The ESV calls it "unauthorized," some versions use the term "strange" – In a nutshell... The problem was it was a sacrifice God had not commanded!
 - d. Now see **vs 3** – God's says this happened to show that He will be sanctified and glorified before the people. The Lesson: Unauthorized worship does not glorify God or reflect His holiness!
- 2. It is when we speak as the oracles of God that God receives the glory through Jesus Christ (**I Peter 4:11**)
 - a. When speak as the oracles of man, no matter how good they sound to us, they only serve to glorify man... If we speak as the oracles of God it shows Him respect & honor & draws people to Him
 - b. We would do well to ask the question, "Why do we sing? Why do we serve others? Why do we preach? Why do we strive to live righteously?" – and so on... The answer is – "To Glorify God" – Bringing God glory and honor is the ultimate purpose behind all we do in "religion"
 - c. If glorifying God is really our goal then would we not seek to do exactly what He wants? (B.C.V.!)
- 3. Many people are very sincere in trying to do great things that would bring God glory. It's hard to accept, but that's not necessarily what glorifies God: (**Luke 21:1-6; 1 Cor 1:20-21**)
 - a. Often it's the things that seem insignificant to us that glorifies God... Like the widow who gave just two mites. That doesn't seem flashy & or costly enough by man's standard, but it honored God! (See her giving in direct contrast to the Jews' infatuation with the grandiose temple)
 - b. And we must remember the greatest wisdom man has to offer is but foolishness to the Lord!
 - c. Instead of going outside of "book, chapter, and verse" to glorify God why don't people just remain within the bounds of His word and be satisfied doing what He asks of us with all our hearts?

C. The "Book, Chapter, And Verse" approach is what gives a diverse people a foundation for unity:

- 1. When Jesus prayed for His disciples, He prayed for a unity that is much different from what we see among those who say they are Christians today: (**John 17:20-21**)
 - a. If you go about asking a large group various people from all the different denominations around here the direct question: Do you think the religious picture of today, with all of the many

- denominations is what the Lord had in mind? Almost everyone would say, "No." If you asked, "Do you think this pleases the Lord?" Again, almost everyone would say no.
- b. Almost everybody sees the religious division of today as a problem; however, it is a problem that most people have come to accept as a "necessary evil." Most say the problem is unfixable!
 - c. Others are more insightful and would respond, "It wouldn't be that way if everyone would just go back to the Bible and only do what it says." But even they readily admit that won't happen!
 - d. We cannot just accept division, in whatever form it takes, because it is totally opposed to the will of the Lord. He prayed, "That they may be ONE!" Notice too that division doesn't just displease the Lord, it cripples the evangelistic influence of Christians among the world!
2. When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth he was writing to a church that was being consumed by division – His appeal to them was for zero division as well as unity in mind and judgment (**1 Cor 1:10**)
 - a. A tough task for Corinth! – They had a very diverse cultural background, had different spiritual backgrounds, and current differences of opinion & preferences. Yet Paul still expected unity!
 - b. What was Paul's answer for their division? A common appeal to ONLY the gospel! (**1 Cor 2:1-4**)
 - c. Today many think unity is impossible for many of the same reasons. Our circumstances now make unity no harder than their circumstances did. Still today the answer to division is the same!
 4. The concept of "book, chapter, & verse" Christianity is a call back to Biblical, New Testament, Christianity:
 - a. **Illustration:** Imagine soccer was totally forgotten about for 1,000 years. No one alive has ever seen it played. One day a rule book is found with examples of how the game is to be played. Having never having seen soccer, we could follow it, & what would be doing? Playing soccer!
 - b. Now, I start reading it, learn the game, and show it to others. We start a B'ham soccer league. We don't know anyone else who knows the game. Now as this is going on, the same thing takes place in Ohio. Both groups, who have never met each other, are playing the same exact game
 - c. Book, chapter, & verse Christianity works the same way... The same gospel when studied & applied by honest hearts should produce the same results. And there is only ONE gospel! (**Eph 4:4-6**)

D. The "Book, Chapter, And Verse" does not create bondage, but provides us with greater liberty:

1. Most people readily understand that when we demand "book, chapter, and verse" that what we are really talking about is matters of authority. To some the subject of authority is seen as a limitation:
 - a. Many don't like talking about authority because that naturally implies there is one you are responsible to, you can't do just anything you want, and that rules & restrictions are involved
 - b. **Illustration:** But consider a world with no traffic laws whatsoever. Now, that certainly provides you the ability to drive in whatever way pleases you, and that would be okay, but it also provides the other drivers the same freedom! The chaos, wrecks, & deaths would be many!
 - c. In the spiritual the same principle would apply – Just think about what societies and the lives of individuals are like when they act as if there were no instructions from God on how to live!
 - d. But aren't God's people are called His servants and isn't God called our master? (**1 Peter 2:16**)
2. What we have to understand is that law does not create bondage, but provides freedom... In fact, the law of Christ is often referred to as "the law of liberty" (**James 1:25; Romans 6:17-20**)
 - a. While we're not under law as a system of justification, we're still under law to Christ. Although we aren't justified by perfect law keeping, God still expects us to strive to obey His will!
 - b. Here particularly God's law under Christ provides us freedom from sin, freedom from the bondage of perfect law keeping, freedom from guilt, etc – It is a law of liberty, not a law of bondage
 - c. If we didn't have the gospel, with its commands & principles to follow, we'd be in terrible bondage

3. Jeremiah had the job of prophesying a very difficult message. He found strength and comfort when he remembered it was God's message and his direction was not from his own mind! **(Jeremiah 10:23)**
4. When we practice true book, chapter, and verse Christianity we are resting our hope, our faith, and our confidence in the wisdom and the power of God, not in ourselves! **(1 Cor 1:30-31)**
 - a. It's a relief to know I don't have to come up with a good enough path for salvation, I don't have to figure out how to organize the local church, & I don't need to worry about how to go about worshipping God... If I had to figure all that out myself, I'd make a mess of it and I know that!
 - b. What does it mean for us to "boast in the Lord" – Certainly that we glory in what Christ has accomplished for us, but it's more than that. It involves placing our joy, confidence, and glory in Christ and not in ourselves. That we account everything that we are to Christ!
 - c. This is what "book, chapter, & verse" does! It places EVERYTHING we do & believe in Christ. We do or believe it because of Christ & His gospel! It makes Him focus of the glory, not man!

“When we are left to act without law, or according to the best of our judgment, we may with propriety say, "we are fully of opinion" — and every man's opinion may pass for what it is worth; but if we acknowledge Christ as our head and lawgiver, when we perform an official act, we ought to be able to shew our authority, to cite chapter and verse; otherwise the act may be deemed illegal and void.”