

*Discovering God's Standards Of Authority*¹

God's Word Constitutes Authority

The Bible constitutes authority for human behavior in all areas of life. God's word sets forth standards or patterns of authority to govern all human conduct. Humanity does not determine these standards, God does. People discover them.

The Bible Teaches That Everyone Must Obey God

As creator and sustainer of the universe, God has power to do whatever is consistent with his character and will. God designates himself as "the Almighty" (Genesis 17:1; 35:11; Revelation 15:3). "With God all things are possible" (Jeremiah 32:17; Matthew 19:26; Luke 1:37). Power and authority are usually associated together. Since God is all-powerful, he also has all authority. All human authority is derived from God, as Jesus the Son of God affirmed to Pilate (John 19:11). So also the Apostle Paul declared that "there is no power but of God, the powers that be are ordained of God" (Romans 13:1).

The power or authority of God is demonstrated by his word, whether spoken or written. The spoken word was the means by which God created all things (Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14-15, 20, 24, 26; Psalms 33:6,9; Hebrews 11:3). The written word, the scriptures, are clothed with all the power and authority of God himself. Thus, when Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, both Satan and Jesus appealed to the written word as having all the authority of God himself (Matthew 4:4, 6, 7, 10; Luke 4:4, 8, 10, 12). Jesus, himself the second person of the Godhead, often appealed to scripture as the authoritative word of God (Matthew 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 7:27; 20:17; 22:37; John 2:17).

Since all authority in heaven and on earth is now given to Christ, he has the right to command (Matthew 28:18-20). We are to hear him in whatever he says (Matthew 17:5; Acts 3:22). God's word abides forever (I Peter 1:25). Christ's words will never pass away (Matthew 24:25). His words will judge us in the last day (John 12:48). His words were preserved by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13). His words are unchanging as they were revealed "once for all" (Jude 3). His words were written by apostles and prophets (2 Peter 1:21; 3:2). Their collected documents constitute the New Testament. We must therefore speak and act according to "the oracles of God" (I Peter 4:11), doing everything commanded of us in the New Testament "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17).

Whenever God speaks, we should obey. Whenever God requires one thing and human authorities require the opposite, then we should obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29) because in God "we live and move and have our very being" (Acts 17:28). Obeying God is not always easy. Indeed, because men generally choose to disobey God, "all who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). Even so, only those who obey God will reap temporal and eternal rewards (Jeremiah 7:23; Luke 6:46; 14:23; Acts 5:32; I Peter 1:22-23; 5:32; Revelation 22:14). Those who disobey God, reap consequences from God, both in time and in eternity (John 3:36; Acts 3:22-23; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

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Personal and Universal Commandments

Some commandments are personal. They are not applicable for everyone. They were for specific individuals at specific times and places and for specific purposes. Such was the case when God gave instructions to Noah regarding the size he was to build the Ark (Genesis 6:14-16), to the Levites regarding how they were to transport the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:12-15; Numbers 3:30-31; Deuteronomy 10:8; 1 Chronicles 13:7-10; 15:2), to Moses regarding his obtaining water from a rock (Numbers 20:7-8), and also to Moses regarding building the tabernacle and its furnishings according to a pattern which God had shown Moses on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 25:40; see also Acts 7:44; Hebrews 8:5), etc. Many other examples might be given, but these will suffice to demonstrate that God's instructions were sometimes given to specific individuals at specific times and for specific purposes.

While we are not commanded to build an Ark, transport the Ark of the Covenant, obtain water from a rock, or build a tabernacle and its furnishings, we are told what God expects of us. And just as God expected people in biblical times to follow his express commands without deviating from them (Deuteronomy 4:2; 5:32; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6), so he also expects that of us today, without our adding to or taking from his word (Revelation 22:18-19).

Some commandments are universal and are applicable for everyone. Such was the case in the Old Testament, after Noah and his family came forth from the Ark. God said, "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. . . . Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is its blood" (Genesis 9:1, 3-4).

In both Old and New Testaments, everyone is required to love God with all one's heart, soul, mind and strength (Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:29-30; Luke 10:27), and to love one's neighbor as oneself (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27). From New Testament days until now, everyone should believe that Jesus is God's son (John 3:18), treat others as they would themselves want to be treated (Matthew 7:12), forgive others for wrongs done against them (Matthew 6:12; Luke 11:4), etc.

The Apostle Paul noted that Roman Christians had followed that "form of doctrine" to which they had been delivered (Romans 6:17). This form, or "standard," of doctrine was the teaching of God that was given as a standard of authority for everyone to obey. Timothy was told to "hold fast the pattern of sound words which you heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13). He was also to commit those words to faithful men that they might teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2). Such standards as these should be followed by all.

Benefits of Obedience and Consequences of Disobedience

When man does as God has declared, he benefits from obeying God. In building the ark, Noah built it of "gopher" wood (Genesis 6:14-21) and made it according to the size which God commanded (Genesis 6:22). He did not use any other kind of wood, nor did he build it a different size than what God commanded. He obeyed God in every other way also (Genesis 6:22). He and his family were then saved by God during the flood which covered the whole earth (Genesis 7:1, 23; 1 Peter 3:20).

In marching around the walls of Jericho, the Israelites marched once each day for six days and six times on the seventh day, then shouted, etc. as commanded by God (Joshua 6:3-5). Because they did exactly as God commanded, no more and no less, the city walls fell down, and they took the city as God had promised (Joshua 6:20).

When man does not do as God has declared, he suffers from disobeying God. In offering sacrifice, Nadab and Abihu used "strange" fire, that is, fire from some other source that God "had not commanded," for which they were stricken dead (Leviticus 10:1-2). In obtaining water from the rock at Meribah, Moses spoke to the people and struck the rock rather than speaking to the rock as God had instructed him. By saying "must we bring water for you" he may have been honoring himself and Aaron rather than God (a kind of Humanism) for which he was denied permission to enter into the promised land (Numbers 20:7-13). In transporting the Ark of the Covenant, Uzzah steadied the Ark with his hand as it was being transported by ox cart rather than as commanded to be borne on shoulders of priests (1 Chronicles 15:13). For his error, Uzzah was stricken dead (2 Samuel 6:7).

How God Authorizes Human Behavior

Since we must all obey God or face the consequences of disobedience, we must understand how God instructs us. This is not difficult to comprehend. We generally understand these principles in everyday life, but generally do not pause to describe them. Basically, there are four specific ways by which God declares what man should do. These are by direct statements, implications, examples, and expedients.²

Direct Statements

Commandments from God certainly authorize human conduct. But so do questions, exhortations, exclamations, etc. All statements from God (whether declared by God himself, or through his prophets and apostles) in the indicative, subjunctive, imperative or optative mood requires man's obedience.

Most people have no difficulty understanding that direct commandments from God require obedience. These are numerous, and of wide variety. They may be quite specific, such as "lie not one to another" (Colossians 3:9) and "always be ready to give a defense to everyone who ask you a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15) or they may be of general principles, such as "test all things, hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21) "whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two" (Matthew 5:41) etc.

There are many direct statements which are not specific commandments in themselves, yet have the sense of obligation. When Jesus told the Devil, "it is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4), we understand him to mean that man is both physical and spiritual, and hence man should not act as though he is only physical. Likewise, when Peter told the Jewish council that "we ought to obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29), he made a matter of fact statement expressing Christian conviction that God should come first in our lives. While this is not stated as a command, no one will deny that it has that sense of obligation.

²For a clear and enlarged presentation of these principles, see Roy C. Deaver, *Ascertaining Bible Authority*, Firm Foundation Publishing House, P. O. Box 17200, Pensacola, FL 32522- 7200.

Implications

Everything authorized by God is declared either explicitly or implicitly. Whatever God requires by implication is just as obligatory as what is explicitly stated by God. Likewise, implication can also indicate that which is not commanded by God.

For example – while one of the Ten Commandments states “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15), Christians do not observe the Sabbath day (i.e. Saturday). Why? Is there a specific statement in scripture voiding this commandment? No, but there is an implication that the commandment is not now applicable. Colossians 2:13-14 declares that God “wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us . . . And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross” (NKJV). Since the Sabbath day was part of the “handwriting of requirements” which was wiped out, the implication is that it is not now required. Since the other nine commandments are restated and specifically required in the New Testament, they remain applicable as standards of righteousness.

Another implication – Christians are commanded to “consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another . . .” (Hebrews 10:24-25). In this passage are implications (1) that Christians *must* assemble themselves together, (2) that the reason for assembling of ourselves together is to “stir up love and good works” and to exhort one another, and (3) that since all Christians are to assemble together, there must be a place to assemble. Since there is no specific statement in scripture regarding the place of meeting, then we are free to select a place according to our own best judgment, in keeping with other biblical principles. This is the passage, and this is the way that church buildings are authorized in scripture.

Examples

Not every action of someone doing something in scripture constitutes a standard of authority for us to do that same thing, as noted earlier. Examples of human conduct may be right or wrong, temporary or permanent, optional or obligatory. When an action is right within itself and involves a permanent principle of righteousness, it then *may be* obligatory that we act in that same way. Some examples may demand similar conduct of us. Other examples may be optional for us to follow. Whether or not a given action is an example authorizing that specific conduct should be determined by applying principles of biblical interpretation and rules of logic, and by considering all biblical teaching on that given subject.³

For example - since in every congregation in the New Testament where elders are mentioned there is a plurality of elders, then the authorized precedent is clearly that there should never be a congregation ruled over by only one elder. The option whenever there is no plurality of elders is that there be no elders, since there were immature churches in New Testament times which were recognized to be without elders.

Again, since Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper with the express command to “do this in remembrance of me” (1 Corinthians 11:24, 25) but did not declare the frequency for partaking of the

³For a detailed study of the question as to when an account of action in the Bible can be used correctly to show that some action is binding on men living today, see Thomas B. Warren, *When Is An “Example” Binding?* National Christian Press, P. O. Box 1001, Jonesboro, AR 72401.

Lord's Supper, we must look to one or more other scriptures to learn how frequently this should be done. Acts 20:7 declares that on the first day of the week "the disciples came together to break bread." Since scripture reveals no other time when the disciples came together to break bread, this example furnishes us with the authorized standard for when we should eat the Lord's Supper - the first day of every week.

Expedients

Whenever God has required a thing to be done, but has not declared how it is to be done, the manner of executing that command falls into the realm of expediency. However, the method by which a thing is done cannot be considered expedient if it does not accomplish something that is already required by God.

Since Christians are commanded not to forsake assembling together, and since an assembly implies a meeting place, it may be expedient (but not required by God) for a church to have its own building in which to worship. On the other hand, it may be more expedient for the church to rent than to purchase its meeting place. In time of persecution, it may be more expedient to meet clandestinely in homes. Any of these options is authorized whenever a practice neither adds to nor takes away from God's specific commandments and whenever it is consistent with other biblical principles.

Divine Authority and the Silence of Scriptures

A cardinal rule from God is that "whatever you do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus . . ." (Colossians 3:17). That means that everything one does in all spheres of life should be authorized by God. There are no exceptions! Whatever is not of God's will is presumptuous and self-willed. It stands condemned by God (2 Peter 2:9-10).

But someone may wonder about what we should do in areas wherein scripture is presumed to be silent. Actually, there is no area wherein scripture is completely silent. If scripture does not give specific guidance, it nonetheless will have given general principles to guide us in any given situation.

Basically, there are two simple rules to guide us regarding the silence of scripture on any given matter. (1) Do all that God says and (2) do nothing which adds to or takes away from what God says (Deuteronomy 4:2; 5:32; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18-19). While this seems simple at first glance its implications need to be more clearly stated.⁴

Only That Conduct Which God Has Declared Is Authorized.

Whenever God gives a specific commandment, God requires man to do only what is stated in that commandment. Anything else which man may do in relation to that commandment, if authorized at all, must be authorized by some other specific statement from God or from some general biblical principle.

For example, the very first commandment that God gave to man was, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the

⁴For an excellent presentation regarding the silence of the scriptures, see James D. Bales, *Be Silent Where The Bible Is Silent*, (James D. Bales, 707 F. Race, Searcy, AR 72143, 1992), 135p.

day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17). God explicitly declared that man should not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Since man could eat of every tree except the tree of knowledge of good and evil, it was not necessary for God to name all the other trees from which man could eat.

In this passage, God did not declare that man could eat meat. It is therefore implied that Adam, and the subsequent human race, was not originally permitted to eat meat. It was only later, after the flood during Noah's days, that God gave man permission to eat meat (Genesis 9:3). Even here, man was restricted. Man was not to eat the blood of an animal (Genesis 9:4) and man was not to kill another man (Genesis 9:6). If any man had eaten meat before God gave permission to Noah after he came forth from the ark, he would have done so without authority from God. Authority for specific human conduct comes only from what God says.

That this is the way God would have all men interpret his commandments is demonstrated by scripture itself. In the Old Testament, God authorized that Aaron should be the first high priest and that all priests should come specifically from the lineage of Aaron (Exodus 28:1). This required that priest come only from the tribe of Levi since Aaron was from that tribe. Even those from the tribe of Levi, who were not descended from Aaron, such as Korah, Dathan and Abiram, were not qualified for the priesthood (Numbers 3:1-10; 16:1-40). When King Uzziah, who was from the tribe of Judah, attempted to function as a priest, he was informed that he was a transgressor and had no authority to act as a priest (2 Chronicles 26:16-18). God punished him for his arrogance in assuming a role for which he was not authorized (2 Chronicles 26:19-20).

Since only Levites could be priests, not even Jesus Christ, the Son of God, qualified to be a priest according to the Mosical law. Why? The author of Hebrews declares that "it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood" (Hebrews 7:14). Thus, even Jesus was not qualified to be a priest under the Mosical law because the scriptures were silent about a priest coming from the tribe of Judah.

Scripture does not always record specific punishment from God against those who act in unauthorized ways. Micah and David also acted as priest but there is no record of their being punished for it. Micah is said to have been the grandson of Manassah (Judges 18:30), but who is generally thought to have been the grandson of Moses, and therefore, since Moses and Aaron were brothers, Micah was no descendent of Aaron (Judges 17-18). David was of the tribe of Judah, rather than of Levi, and therefore was not qualified to be a priest (2 Samuel 6:17-18). We know they were unauthorized in acting as priests precisely because there is neither specific command from God nor general biblical principle which gave them authority to act as they did. Ascertaining right or wrong behavior is not dependent upon observing the results of that behavior.

Silence of Scripture Prohibits Any Action Not Specified

The silence of scripture regarding a specific behavior prohibits whatever conduct is not specifically authorized or whatever conduct is not the logical result of general biblical teachings. To illustrate: When the apostles were put in prison, God sent an angel to release them. Through the angel, God commanded the apostles, "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life" (Acts 5:20). This commandment prohibits certain things. (1) While the passage does not say they could not have stayed in the prison, the command to "go" implied disobedience if they had stayed. (2) While the scripture does not say they could not have sat as they taught, since they are

specifically told to stand, any other posture than standing on this occasion would have been considered forbidden. (3) While scripture does not say they could not teach anywhere besides the temple, the statement to "speak in the temple" implies that where ever else they may have gone would have been disobedience to God. (4) While scripture does not say they could not speak on subjects other than "the words of this life," any other message would have been recognized as disobedience to God's commandment. In these matters, what was not specifically declared would not have been authorized.

Silence of Scripture Permits Action Which Does Not Add To Or Take Away From What God Commands

Whenever God's command does not give specifics, then we are left with general biblical principles to guide us in choosing the manner in which the command will be performed, so long as we neither add to, nor take away from God's commandments.⁵

There are some things in the above illustration not specified which the apostles were permitted to choose for themselves. (1) The command to "go" to the temple did not specify which route the apostles were to take in going from their prison cell to the temple. Any route consistent with general scriptural principles, such as using one's time, resources and energies wisely, would have been considered authorized. (2) The command to speak to the people the words of this life did not specify the way the apostles would begin and develop their individual messages. That was left to their discretion. (3) While the apostles were commanded to go to the temple to speak to the people, the commandment was silent regarding where in the temple each of the apostles was to stand as he spoke to the people. Therefore, any place within the temple where the apostles chose to speak to the people would have been considered authorized by God. These things would have been considered authorized because they neither added to, nor took away from God's specific commandment.

Divine Authority And The Two Covenants⁶

Divine Authority Now Comes From The New Covenant. The Mosaical Covenant Was Abolished By Christ's Death On The Cross

The Bible consists of two parts, commonly designated as the Old and New Testaments, or Covenants. Divine authority comes from God and is recorded in scripture. The Old Testament constitutes a record of God's dealing with man under former covenants. Prior to the inauguration of the New Covenant, God's requirements were declared in the Mosaic Covenant. The Mosaic covenant was made only with the descendents of Jacob. It was not given to all peoples of the earth (Exodus 19:10-11; Deuteronomy 5:1-3; Jeremiah 31:31; Galatians 4:24-25).⁷ Centuries after the law of Moses began, Jeremiah predicted that God would make a New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31).

⁵An excellent analysis of generic and specific commandments is given by J. D. Thomas, "We Be Brethren," (Biblical Research Press, 774 E. N. 15th St., Abilene, TX, 1958), 262p.

⁶For further information on the two covenants, see Ashley S. Johnson, *Johnson's Sermons on The Two Covenants*, (Stenographically Reported) Dallas: Eugene S. Smith, Publisher, 1949 (originally published, 1899). 240p. Although written a century ago, this work on the two covenants is still one of the best treatments available.

⁷For arguments on this proposition, see chapter one of *Johnson's Sermons on The Two Covenants*, cited above, 7-24.

The Mosaic covenant was annulled by Christ death on the cross (Colossians 2:14, Ephesians 2:13-18). By his blood that he shed on the cross, Christ brought into being the New Covenant, which he had anticipated (Matthew 26:28). The New Covenant replaced the Old (Hebrews 10:9). We are now subject to the teaching of Christ and his apostles (Hebrews 1:1-2). New Testament documents declare that the New Covenant is now applicable to everyone (Matthew 28:18-19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; John 3:16; 8:12; Romans 1:16).

But some will object, saying that the Mosaic Covenant (or law) was divided into two parts, the moral and the ceremonial; and that it was the ceremonial law which was annulled by Christ's death on the cross, while the moral law remains.⁸ However, the Bible itself makes no categorical distinction between the ceremonial and the moral law. Moreover, God said he had placed his covenant within the Ark of the Covenant (1 Kings 8:21). That covenant was the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone. The Mosaic Covenant and the Ten Commandments may therefore be considered as two ways of expressing the same thing (Exodus 34:27-28; Deuteronomy 5:22). Most of the Ten Commandments specify elements of the moral law. Through Jeremiah, God promised to make a new covenant, unlike the first covenant, which would annul the first covenant (Jeremiah 31:31; See also Hebrews 8:13).

Although most of the Ten Commandments relate to moral codes, they were abolished by Christ death on the cross. Even so, most of the moral law is valid for everyone today, not because they were part of the Old Covenant, but because they are incorporated within the New Testament.⁹ The New Covenant is different from the Old in many ways. One way is that the Old Covenant gave primary attention to curbing unacceptable behavior, whereas the new focuses upon the attitude of the heart that causes behavior (Matthew 5:27-28; 5:22; 5:43-44; See also Romans 13:8). Therefore, appeal cannot generally be made to the Mosaic Covenant in discovering God's standards of authority by which humanity should live today.

⁸This viewpoint is declared primarily by Reconstructionists, so called because they desire to use the Mosaic law as the foundation on which to reconstruct national laws. Some significant books which declare this point of view are: Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (Expanded Edition) Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1977, 619p. See also his *By This Standard: The Authority of God's Law Today*, Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985, 372p.; Rousas John Rushdooney, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, (The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company) 1973, 304-305. A one page statement of beliefs generally held by Reconstructionists, written by Andrew Sandlin, "The Creed of Christian Reconstructionism," may be found, among other places, in the journal, *Chalcedon Report*, November, 1995, 2. For a brief evaluation and critique of Reconstructionism, see Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Options and Issues*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989, 199-207.

⁹Nine of the Ten Commandments are restated within the New Testament, and are therefore required of all men today. Only the fourth commandment regarding rest on the Sabbath day is not commanded in the New Testament. Primary Old Testament references are first given for each of the commandments, then significant New Testament references are listed as follows: **1st**: Exodus 20:1-3; Deuteronomy 5:6-7, Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27; **2nd**: Exodus 20:4-6; Deuteronomy 5:8-10, Acts 15:20, 29; 1 Corinthians 10:14; 20-22; I John 5:21; **3rd**: Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11, Matthew 5:33-37; James 3:10; 5:12; **4th**: Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15 - *none in New Testament*; **5th**: Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16, Ephesians 6:2-3; **6th**: Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17, Matthew 5:21-22; 19:18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20; Romans 1:29; James 2:11; **7th**: Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18, Matthew 5:27-28, 32; Romans 2:22; 13:9; Galatians 5:19; **8th**: Exodus 20:15; Deuteronomy 5:19, Matthew 19:18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:10; Romans 2:21; 13:9; Ephesians 4:28; **9th**: Exodus 20:16; Deuteronomy 5:20, Matthew 19:18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20; Romans 13:9; **10th**: Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21, Romans 7:7; 13:9; James 4:2.

However, Biblical Precepts From The Old Testament Are Applicable Whenever They Demonstrate God's Unchanging Character

While God has made different covenants with various people at different times in human history, and has therefore changed some aspects of his dealings with humanity, there are some things that have never changed. The attributes of God's character never change (Psalms 102:27; Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 1:10-11; James 1:17). God is and has always been the personification of truth (Numbers 23:19; I Samuel 15:29; Hebrews 6:18); love (John 3:16; Titus 3:4-5; Hebrews 12:6; 1 John 4:8); goodness (Exodus 33:19; Deuteronomy 30:9; Psalms 25:8-10; 31:19; 33:5; 36:7; 86:5; 100:5; 106:1; 119:68; Nahum 1:7; Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:17; James 1:17); holiness (Joshua 24:19; I Samuel 6:20; I Chronicles 16:10; Job 6:10; 15:15; 25:5; Psalms 22:3; 47:8; Luke 1:49; John 17:11; Romans 1:23; I John 2:20; Revelation 4:8; 6:10; 15:4); mercy (Exodus 34:6-7; Deuteronomy 5:10; I Kings 8:23; Psalms 136); faithfulness (Psalms 33:4; 88:1; 119:90; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 10:13; I Thessalonians 5:24; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; 1 John 1:9), etc. His character is always the same. God has always required man to live in conformity with his unchanging character (Matthew 5:48; Luke 6:35-36; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:32; 5:1; Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:15-16; 1 John 3:2). He has always required that man believe that he is, and that he rewards those who seek him (Genesis 15:1; Psalms 19:11; 58:11; Matthew 6:4, 6, 18; Colossians 3:24; Hebrews 11:6; Revelation 22:12). God has always required that man love God and his neighbor (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 19:19; 22:37, 39; Mark 12:30-31; Luke 10:27; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8). These are but a few of the many examples that might be given that God's requirements of humanity based upon His unchanging character are constant.

Therefore, in discovering God's standards of authority by which humanity should live today, appeal can be made to Old Testament requirements regarding human behavior whenever such requirements are based on God's unchanging character.

Conclusion

These principles of biblical interpretation help us to understand God's authority governing our obedience to his commandments. They enable us to set forth God's standard for human behavior in all areas of life. They enable us to determine whether the individual, the family, the church, and the nation conform to God's standards of authority. And, wherein human behavior fails to live by God's standards, these principles of biblical interpretation give us guidance to implement or reform human behavior individually, and in the various institutions he has authorized, so that our behavior will be consistent with God's instructions.