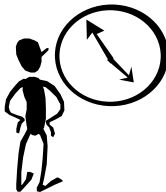


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study 4:00 p.m.
Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

The Authority for The Lord's Supper: Generic or Specific?

By Tim Haile

Every time I hear the Covid-19 virus described as the “novel” virus I think of the many “novel” doctrines that the virus has generated among brethren. Certain passages are being explained and applied in ways that they never were before. This is suspicious on its face. Have we been wrong about these passages for all of these years? Have multiple generations of devoted Christians been wrong? The answer is no. The problem is that fear of the “novel” Covid-19 virus has caused some brethren to take these “novel” (new) positions on the Scriptures.

One new position being much touted since the onset of the virus is the notion that the authority for the Lord's Supper is “generic.” In their desperation to find Bible authority for non-church-assembly observance of the Lord's Supper, some brethren are now claiming that the Lord's Supper is established upon the basis of generic authority, not specific authority. Their newfound hermeneutic allows them to observe the Lord's Supper outside of a church assembly in any social arrangement that is convenient for them. The argument flatly ignores the fact that every aspect of the Lord's Supper is regulated by specific divine authority! As we shall see, God specified the elements, the purpose, the day, the frequency, the duration and the place (church assembly) for observing the Lord's Supper. Furthermore, the New Testament contains a uniform pattern of approved apostolic examples and other direct teaching that proves that the Lord's Supper is a church assembly practice.

I am absolutely certain that most of these brethren have not considered the implications of their newfound position. It will unleash a host of new errors upon the brotherhood

based upon a whole new interpretive approach as to how Bible authority is established and applied.

Conservative Bible students have for years appreciated the difference between generic authority and specific authority. Had God merely told Noah to “make an ark,” then Noah would have been authorized to make an ark from any type of materials that he chose. Had God told Noah to “make an ark of wood,” then Noah would have been authorized to make an ark from any type of wood that he chose. However, God told Noah to “make an ark of gopher wood” (Genesis 6:14). This specificity obligated Noah to use gopher wood in the construction of the ark, and he could use no other kind of wood.

Failure to appreciate the significance of specific authority results in all types of errors and false practices. For example, the New Testament specifies singing as the kind of music used to glorify God (Romans 15:9; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Matthew 26:30; Acts 16:25). The specific command to “sing” necessarily excludes the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God. (Note: As we will later observe in connection with the Lord’s Supper, inherent in God’s commands is the authority for us to use whatever lawful and expedient means necessary to execute those commands. With singing this includes songbooks and other essentials. With the Lord’s Supper it includes containers for distributing the elements.) However, in areas where God has specified, whether with regard to time, frequency, materials, action, format, purpose or other matters, we must do as God instructs.

The Lord’s Supper Is Established By Specific Authority — NOT Generic Authority

Every component of the Lord’s Supper is governed, not by generic authority but by specific authority. Even the most basic command to observe the supper contains a specific instruction related to its purpose — “do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24). There are six key areas that define and govern the observance of the Lord’s Supper. Failure to respect God’s laws results in people doing something that as Paul says, “is not the Lord’s Supper” (1 Corinthians 11:20).

1. As noted, the Lord’s Supper is specific with regard to its **purpose**. If the authority for the Lord’s Supper was generic then we could observe it for absolutely any purpose. Of course God did not merely say, “observe the Lord’s Supper.” He assigned a purpose for its observance. We don’t eat the Lord’s Supper to commemorate the fact that Noah built an ark or that Moses parted the Red Sea or that Daniel survived the lion’s den. We observe the Lord’s Supper to commemorate the sacrifice of Christ — to remember His body and blood (1 Corinthians 11:24-25).

2. The Lord’s Supper is specific with regard to its **elements**. If the authority for the Lord’s Supper was generic then we could use whatever elements that we choose.

You could use milk and Oreo cookies. However, God specified “unleavened bread” and “fruit of the vine” (Matthew 26:17, 29).

3. The Lord’s Supper is specific with regard to its **duration**. If the authority for the Lord’s Supper was generic then we could stop its practice whenever we choose. However, 1 Corinthians 11:26 specifies the **duration** of the Lord’s Supper. It is to be observed until the Lord comes.

4. The Lord’s Supper is specific with regard to its **day**. If the authority for the Lord’s Supper was generic then we could observe the Lord’s Supper on whatever day of the week that we choose. However, Acts 2:42 and 20:7 contain approved apostolic examples of the Lord’s Supper being observed upon the first day of the week.

5. The Lord’s Supper is specific with regard to its **frequency**. If the authority for the Lord’s Supper was generic then we could observe the Lord’s Supper as frequently or infrequently as we choose. However, Acts 20:7 contains an implication from which we infer a weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper, as noted above, upon the first day of every week.

6. The Lord’s Supper is specific with regard to its **place or social arrangement (the church assembly)**. If the authority for the Lord’s Supper was generic then we could observe the Lord’s Supper in whatever social arrangement that we choose, whether at home when we feel bad, at home when we feel good, at home when we are afraid to leave the house, on the roadside when traveling, on a cruise ship, in the bass boat, on the deer stand...etc. However, the New Testament specifies the local church assembly as the place of observance (1 Corinthians 11:18, 20, 33). Along with these direct instructions we have two approved apostolic examples of the Lord’s Supper being observed in local church assemblies (Acts 2:42 and Acts 20:7). There are no New Testament examples of the Lord’s Supper being observed outside of or away from a local church assembly.

One brother argued in a Youtube video that New Testament examples of the Lord’s Supper being observed in a church assembly are purely incidental and have no binding authority. He likened it to New Testament examples of churches meeting on different floor levels. He obviously does not know the difference between binding and non-binding examples. The fact that disciples met on different floors (1st floor, Acts 3:11, 2nd floor, Luke 22:12, 3rd floor, Acts 20:9) proves that the floor level is not binding. However, EVERY New Testament example of Lord’s Supper observance is in a church assembly (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:17, 18, 20, 33, 34). The pattern is uniform. It is not purely incidental. If we can take this brother’s approach with regard to the Lord’s Supper passages then we can do so with other uniform examples, including passages that address church support of gospel preachers or saints-only benevolence. This brother’s new hermeneutic is dangerous and could lead to major apostasy if people ac-

cept and act upon his faulty premise.

Others are repeatedly arguing that “Paul and his companions must have taken the Lord’s Supper on the road when traveling.” This argument is based purely upon the silence of the Scriptures. Just six weeks ago these same brethren taught that silence does not authorize. What has changed?

Others cite examples of people going into a new area to start a new church. EX-ACTLY! They start a new **church**! A church can observe the Lord’s Supper even if it is a “new” church (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:18, 20).

It good and wise to take precautions to avoid contracting and spreading Covid-19. However, it far more important that people avoid perverting Scriptures (Galatians 1:6-9).

Commands in Conflict

By Andrew Hamilton

"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it." (Matthew 10:37-39)

This is just one of the verses that show us that God is supposed to be the top priority in our lives. But when we say "God comes first," what do we really mean? *"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." (Colossians 3:17)* Everything we decide to do should be based in what God has authorized.

Sometimes, we have a hard time choosing the right course of action. We look at the many things we want or need to do and try to give them appropriate priorities. But do we always consider God's will in this process?

"[Jesus] answered and said to them, 'Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God" -- then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.'" (Matthew 15:3-6)

Sometimes, we can end up breaking God's law by attempting to rate one duty over another. *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone." (Matthew 23:23)* Notice that even when part of the law is a "weightier matter," we cannot neglect the simple things either.

God's laws don't conflict with each other. The Lord gave orders to his disciples on *"teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you;"* ([Matthew 28:20](#)) not "some things," nor "the most important parts," but "all things." There is no pick-and-choose in what to do or not do. We cannot leave anything out. *"Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."* ([James 4:17](#))

This is not just a problem that the Jews were having back in those days. Here's an example. I write this because of a conversation from a few years back. An older brother had been telling me about how he'd worked hard at his job and finally gotten to where he could have time off on Sunday to attend the worship services. Hold on; didn't God state plainly that we should assemble together every time? *"And let us 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, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."* ([Hebrews 10:24-25](#))

Yes, I did bring Hebrews up at the time. His response was what really nailed this event into my head: *"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."* ([1 Timothy 5:8](#)) The believer has to provide for his family; if he does not, he has denied the faith.

I wasn't sure what to say to that, but it didn't sit right. For two and a half years, I've been thinking long and hard about the relationship of these two passages. I'm hoping that the answer already appears obvious to you. When you choose to provide for your family over assembling with God's family, what does it say about your priorities? Is there a conflict in these two commands, or did the implementation of one cause a conflict with the other?

How do you avoid this conflict? This one is simple, but tough. Take a job that lets you follow both commands. A good job can be hard to find. But consider: is it a good job if it wants you to disobey God?

God has told us that we have to observe all of His commandments, so we can be sure that there is always a way to do the right thing. *"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."* ([1 Corinthians 10:13](#)) The right to do is not always the easiest thing to do, but that is the nature of temptation. But God is faithful, and He has promised a reward in the end.

"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life." ([Matthew 19:29](#))

One more thought for the road: He mentions leaving both houses and lands. In those days, lands or farms were major sources of income. Even if you are leaving a nice job, don't worry; Christ offers better benefits.