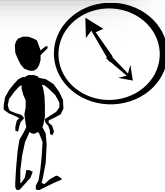


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study	9:00 a.m.
Worship	10:00 a.m.
Worship	5:00 p.m.

(every other week)

Wednesday:

Bible Study	6:30 p. m.
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Necessary Inference in the Old Testament

By Terry Wane Benton

It has been said that the Old Testament was always direct in communicating God's will and that the idea of having to "infer" God's will has never been necessary and, therefore, is not necessary now. But is that argument a necessary conclusion? Consider just a few things that show that the argument's premise has never been so.

In Deuteronomy 1:5, we find Moses having to explain the Law. When you explain the Law, you must tell the meaning and how it applies. But, you cannot explain how it applies without using reason and connecting the words to an application and that simply cannot be done and never has been done and never can be done without using the common sense of drawing a necessary inference. An application is always an inference that this is how we are to perform and apply those words.

On this side of the Jordan, in the land of Moab,

- Moses began to explain this law NKJV
- Moses began to expound this law, NIV
- Moses began to explain this law - AMP

Explaining and expounding the Law means inferring both the meaning and proper application of words. There is never an escape from having to reason through understanding and proper application.

"So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading" (Nehemiah 8:7-8 NKJV).

Notice that there is *"the reading distinctly from the book."* Is that all that needed to be done? No! Reading demands discerning the meaning of words, and understanding

the words demands inferring the sense in which it is to be understood and applied. Without proper reasoning upon the words in the book, there can be no proper application. But all application comes through necessary inference.

Take one of the Ten Commandments and see if this is not so. “*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it Holy.*” Those are words in the Law. But what is meant by “remember?” Does it mean to remember it in thought and just have a thought? What is the Sabbath day? The text itself does not say what it is. This must be learned from other passages with more information coming into play than just the words themselves. How does one keep it holy? Again, this is learned by comparison of information in other places, and then a conclusion is drawn from the total information on that topic. After the reasoning has drawn the necessary inference on the meaning of the words, there is the necessary inference as to who it applies to and how it will be carried into our actions.

Don’t let anyone fool you about the common sense of reasoning through commands and examples to their necessary inference about the proper application in whatever law we discuss. To ridicule such things is to claim that God does not require reasoning upon His words for proper application and obedience.

Furthermore, Jesus answered a question about the proper application of the Law of Moses by referring to the statement in Genesis 2 and telling the context of Deuteronomy 24 and the proper application to those who want to be righteous instead of living in hardness of heart. Thus, Jesus used necessary inference from the sources to show proper application. That means that Jesus believed in necessary inference.

Is all law directly stated, like, “Do not divorce for every cause?” Or must we discern from all that is stated that God forbids divorce for every cause? In discerning and reasoning over the collective statements, each tested in their context, one reaches the necessary implication that we are forbidden to divorce for every cause. Here is a law derived by necessary inference from the collective data.

When Satan tempted Jesus and misused scripture, Jesus showed that there was a necessary inference to be drawn regarding the proper usage of scripture (Matthew 4). When a doctrine of non-resurrection was asked, Jesus showed that there is a necessary inference to be drawn from the statement, “*I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*” Thus, truth and righteousness were not all spelled out. Many things had to be discerned by exercising the senses upon the available evidence and then drawing the necessary inference. This is all part of the process of “*testing all things, and holding fast what is good*” (I Thessalonians 5:21).

This means we cannot escape the fact that God has always expected His people to reason properly. Law and truth are not always directly spelled out, and you do derive law from statements, examples, and commands that force us to necessary conclusions not directly stated. Those who say otherwise reveal an unfortunate ignorance that reason

can't overcome in them.

Jesus Believed in Necessary Inferences

By Terry Wane Benton

He said, "*Moses wrote about Me*" (John 5:46). Still, since Moses never used the name "Jesus," it would have to be a necessary implication of Moses and a necessary inference on our end to conclude that Moses wrote about Jesus. The evidence of reason is strong; in fact, it is as strong as if Moses said, "I am writing about **Jesus**." A necessary inference is as strong as a direct statement. Jesus believed that reasonable people could and would come to that necessary conclusion.

Jesus also believed in unnecessary inferences, which means that some reach conclusions not warranted by the evidence. He asked, "*Who do men say that I am?*" (Matthew 16:13f). Some men drew an inference that was not absolutely necessary. Some had opinions, but Jesus did not believe that every opinion had equal value. Some opinions were that He was "John the Baptist," but that was not a valid conclusion since John had openly baptized Jesus. Who was John or Jesus then, except two separate individuals? A necessary inference from the evidence is that Jesus is **not** John the Baptist. People may draw inferences from limited knowledge and not knowing and considering all the available facts. So, Jesus did not believe that every opinion had equal value. Some opinions are groundless. Jesus was not Elijah because Elijah's prediction had already been fulfilled in John the Baptist. Jesus was not Jeremiah because there was no prediction of Jeremiah coming back and being the Messiah. The similarity of teaching and rejection is just similarity, not identity. So, some inferences people drew were not "necessary" (forced by all evidence), and Jesus knew this! The disciples came to the solid rock necessary inference that "*you are the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the living God*" (Matthew 16:18f), and this was a necessary inference. All the evidence forced this conclusion. It was solid as a **rock**. It was the same as if Jesus said it directly. Necessary inferences result from reasoning to the logical conclusion of what all the facts in evidence present.

Jesus used necessary inference from the evidence of Genesis 2. "*The two shall be one flesh*" has necessary implications. It would certainly refute any idea that we can divorce for any cause we want. Here is a rule that is forced by an example. In the example of God's bringing Adam and Eve together for a union of two in one, God inferred a law that was not directly stated, though it is expected. We are expected to draw the necessary implications from the available evidence, which is why Jesus stood on solid ground in His answer. The Pharisees were misusing Deuteronomy 24 to justify divorce for every cause, and Jesus brought in a very relevant piece of evidence that they had conveniently forgotten. Genesis 2 forms the bedrock truth of God's plan for all marriag-

es: “*The two shall be **one** flesh,*” which implies the deepest kind of unity that should never be easily separated. Jesus was correct in believing in the necessary inference and implications of the total evidence.

When the Pharisees asked, “*Who can forgive sins but God alone?*” they thought that Jesus was not God, but they had drawn an unnecessary conclusion. Now, Jesus did not have to state that He was God. He asked, “*Which is easier to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise up and walk?’ But to show that He had the power to forgive, He told the man to ‘Rise up and walk!’*” (Luke 5:21-25). Jesus was counting on the necessary implication that if I could work this miracle, My claim to be a deity would be validated. It is a necessary inference that “I am God and have the power to forgive sins!” Jesus did not have to directly state “I am God,” as the evidence He would present would force the necessary inference and that is just as strong as stating it directly. Jesus rested His claim to deity on the necessary implication of His statements and the implication of His miracle. Jesus believed anyone could draw that forced conclusion if they were honest with all the available evidence.

When John the Baptist sent word to Jesus asking, “*Are You the coming One, or do we look for another?*” (Matthew 11:3f), Jesus didn’t answer with a direct “**Yes.**” He said, “*Go and tell John the things which you see and hear: The blind receive their sight ...*” (and other miracles), and it was clear that Jesus expected John to use those facts to form his own necessary inference. What is the forced conclusion? The necessary inference Jesus expected John to draw is, “Jesus is the Coming One, and I don’t need to look for another!” What other legitimate conclusion could he reach? In other words, Jesus did not have to spell it out. He expected John and all of us to draw the necessary conclusions.

We could go on and on with one example after another. It is a necessary inference that those who do not believe in necessary inference do not believe in Jesus and His expectations for us to use sound reasoning. When you hear someone denigrating the very idea of necessary inferences, you know this person does not know Jesus as they ought!

Jesus’ Reasoning of Law and Necessary Inference

There can be no doubt that Jesus believed that commands, statements, and examples all carry necessary implications and that He expects us to draw proper inferences from the total data on any subject. We want to expand on those examples because some deny the validity and necessity of such reasoning from the Bible. Notice the following examples:

1. Jesus pointed to the Sabbath law, combined it with the law of mercy, and brought His listeners to the necessary conclusion that the Sabbath law of rest did not prohibit acts of mercy. (Matthew 12:11-14). This was understood when helping an oxen out

of the ditch. You would not leave it in the ditch to suffer just because the Sabbath called for no work. The no-work rule was not to trump the rule of mercy. That did not have to be stated, as the total evidence demonstrated that mercy trumps sacrifice. The necessary inference is that works of mercy trump the Sabbath rule of no work when a special need arises on the Sabbath. Healing a man on the Sabbath is mercy trumping a no-work rule. That is a necessary inference from the total evidence. Jesus used necessary inference here and expected that such a law could be discerned by any honest human.

2. In Matthew 16:1-4, Jesus pointed out that they knew how to “discern” weather patterns. You draw necessary inferences from the signs of weather patterns. If you know how to reason from those weather indicators, you should also be able to draw the proper conclusions from the prophetic indicators about the Messiah. Jesus is the Messiah is a necessary inference.

Your eternal destiny depends on weighing the evidence and drawing the correct conclusion. Life and death depend on you drawing the right conclusion. Therefore, God believes you can and believes in the truth of reasoning properly and the absolute necessity of necessary inference. Those who argue otherwise are demonstrations of how not to reason.

Ten Facts About Local Congregations

By Gardner Hall

Ten facts about local congregations today: taken from the letters to the seven churches (Revelation 2,3).

1. Christ knows their works!
2. Most congregations have a mixture of good qualities and weaknesses.
3. Christ considers some congregations in bad spiritual shape to be His still.
4. Even though we might not be able to conscientiously recommend some congregations (like Sardis and Laodicea), that doesn't mean we are judging if they are still of Christ. He is the judge of when he removes their candlestick.
5. Even good congregations often have some bad apples! (Revelation 2:14-16)
6. Even badly flawed congregations often have some good people (Revelation 2:24; 3:4). Salvation is personal!
7. All congregations with serious flaws are considered to be in danger despite the good qualities they might have (Revelation 2:5; 2:18; 3:3).
8. Congregations we consider impressive and strong often aren't (Revelation 3:1; 3:17).
9. Congregations that we may consider small and unimportant are precious to God (Revelation 3:8-10).
10. Christ's promises are for those individuals who overcome.