

## Applying the Bible

What are our attitudes, presumptions, and methods for applying the Scriptures to life?

1. The Old Testament versus the New
  - a. Fundamental difference in audience
    - 1) Jeremiah 31:31 – 34, Hebrews 8:8 – 12
    - 2) The Kingdom formerly was populated by a vast majority of unbelievers
    - 3) The present Kingdom is populated by believers only
  - b. Purpose of practices
    - 1) To illustrate concepts
      - a) Sacrifice
      - b) Festivals
      - c) Temple
    - 2) To prepare for the Messiah (same items)
  - c. Result of obedience under the Law
    - 1) Good crops and livestock, victory in war, large families
    - 2) Blessings: Deuteronomy 7:12 – 16, 28:1 - 14
    - 3) Curses: Deuteronomy 26:15 – 26, 28:15 – 68
    - 4) No mention of heaven, hell, or eternal life
  - d. Law is for the lawless: 1 Timothy 1:8 - 11
2. The New Testament Church
  - a. Futility of lists of practices (Romans 14:1 – 15:7)
    - 1) What is a “doubtful thing”? (14:1)
    - 2) Diet, holidays (14:2 – 23)
    - 3) Whatever things were written before were written for our learning (15:4)
    - 4) Receive one another just as Christ has received you (15:7)
    - 5) See also (1 Timothy 1:3 – 7, 4:1 – 5, 2 Timothy 2:14, 3:1 – 7, 4:3 – 4, Titus 1:10 – 14, 1 Corinthians 8, Colossians 2:16 – 23)
    - 6) The New Testament does not give a list of essential practices
      - a) People piece together lists based on different presumptions
        - i. Worship as an event (acts of worship)
        - ii. “Silence of the Scriptures”
        - iii. Command, example, and necessary inference
      - b) Tradition influences relative importance
      - c) Culture influences relative importance
      - d) Even the 1<sup>st</sup> century church had problems with this
      - e) We have met the enemy and he is us
  - b. Liberty
    - 1) We have liberty: Titus 1:15, 1 Corinthians 6:12, 10:23, Galatians 5:1
    - 2) Do not abuse liberty: 1 Corinthians 8:9, Galatians 5:13, 1 Peter 2:15 – 16
  - c. Motives for regulation
    - 1) Distrust of members
    - 2) Concept of authority
    - 3) Law is what we know
    - 4) Liberty (faith) is hard to measure

- 5) Assuming that behavior is the purpose of Creation
3. How do we interpret and apply?
  - a. All was written to the various original audiences. We are observers.
    - 1) Like the angels, we learn from their faith (Ephesians 3:8 – 12)
    - 2) Blessed are those who do not see yet believe (John 20:29)
    - 3) Dividing the Scriptures into “them” and “us” is arbitrary
  - b. “General” statements of truth sometimes have a “hidden” context
    - 1) A “general” statement in the Old Testament may be directed to unbelieving Israel, not to all people of every age, else Gentiles would be excluded. (*e.g.*, unclean things were an abomination to the Lord). Arguments against immoral behavior and against certain foods are described with similar words.
    - 2) “All” or “none” sometimes refers only to members of a specific group (Romans 3:10 – 18), particularly quotations in the New Testament from the Old Testament
    - 3) The New Testament was written entirely during a period of frequent “signs and wonders.” To the original audience, this was normal. We need to see beyond the miraculous to the point being made. (*e.g.*, 1 Corinthians 14:23 – 26)
4. Where do practices fit?
  - a. Morality
    - 1) We are the Temple of the living God, therefore cleanse yourselves, perfecting holiness in the fear of Christ (2 Corinthians 6:16 – 7:1)
    - 2) Unrighteousness is not “fitting” (Romans 1:28, Galatians 5:1 – 14) Fitting?
      - a) John 17:20 – 23 “That the world may believe that Thou sent Me”
      - b) Matthew 5:48 “Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect”
    - 3) Malice and wickedness spoils sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:8)
    - 4) Bad behavior slows the spread of the gospel (1 Corinthians 5:1)
    - 5) Bad behavior by outsiders is not our concern (1 Corinthians 5:9 – 10)
    - 6) Displaying the power of God (2 Corinthians 4:7)
    - 7) Works of the flesh are contrary to the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16 – 25)
    - 8) “Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience” (Colossians 3:6) Note: check the context!
    - 9) Immorality is contrary to sound doctrine (1 Timothy 8 – 11)
    - 10) Useful for the Master (2 Timothy 2:21)
  - b. Rituals are reminders, not goals
    - 1) Baptism (10 illustrations in one action)
    - 2) Lord’s Supper (14 illustrations in one action)
    - 3) More?
      - a) Wedding/marriage
      - b) Clergy
      - c) Foot washing (John 13:15)
      - d) Sacraments
5. What is the point?
  - a. Trust God (“trust” perhaps conveys the concept better than our modern word “faith”)
  - b. Love your neighbor