

## The Call for a New Hermeneutic

*by John Isaac Edwards*

Down through the ages, the Lord’s people have desired something new. When the Lord had judges to lead His people, they said, “Give us a king...” (1 Sam. 8:6). When the ark of the covenant was being moved, it was to be carried with staves (Ex. 25:13-15). 2 Samuel 6:3 finds them having “...set the ark of God upon a new cart...” The people of God have never really come up with anything new. “The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun” (Eccl. 1:9). Israel desired a king “...like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:5). The Philistines set the ark on a new cart when sending it out of their country (1 Sam. 6:7-8). Today, there are those who are demanding some new things. Among other things, there is the call for a new hermeneutic.

### 1) What Is a Hermeneutic?

Hermeneutics is the science

of interpretation. Sacred hermeneutics has to do with how the Scriptures are interpreted and understood.

**2) The Old Hermeneutic.** We have recognized the Scriptures direct us by:

*A statement or command.* A good example is when Acts 17:30 records, “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.”

*An approved example.* Authority is also established by appealing to the example of the church with the presence and approval of an apostle. Acts 20:7 is an approved example: “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread...” The miracle performed shows God’s approval (Acts 20:9-12).

*A necessary inference.* Sometimes a thing is not specifically stated in the text and there is no example, but it is necessarily implied by the language

used. When Jesus was baptized, for example, it is not specifically stated that He went down into the water; but from the fact that He came up out of the water, it is necessarily inferred that He must have gone down into the water (Mt. 3:16).

**3) Jesus Used It.** Notice the Lord’s teaching in John 13:34-35: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” There is command, example, and necessary inference in the Lord’s teaching.

*A statement or command* — “...love one another...”

*An approved example* — “...as I have loved you...”

*A necessary inference* — “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples...” A conclusion is drawn by all men from disciples loving one another.

#### 4) The Apostles

**Used It.** In Acts 15, we have the Jerusalem discussion. Controversy arose in the first century over whether it was needful for Gentile converts to be circumcised in order to be saved. Some were teaching, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). The apostles and elders came together to consider the matter. Read the chapter and observe how the issue was settled. Acts 15:7-21 records three speeches: Peter's speech (vv. 7-11), Barnabas and Paul's speech (v. 12), and James' speech (vv. 13-21). Notice the appeal to:

*A statement or command.* James made reference to direct statements of Scripture from the prophecy of Amos concerning the Gentiles (Acts 15:13-21; Amos 9:11-12).

*An approved example.* Barnabas and Paul cited the example of "...

miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them" (Acts 15:12).

*A necessary inference.* Peter mentioned how God sent him to the Gentiles to preach the word and God giving the Gentiles the Holy Spirit as He did the Jews on Pentecost. From these facts, Peter inferred that God "...put no difference between us [Jews] and them [Gentiles], purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they" (Acts 15:9-11).

The fact that "...no such commandment" had been given settled this issue (Acts 15:24). Regardless of the question, controversy or issue today, it can be settled the same way, by appealing

to direct statements or commands, approved examples, and necessary inferences. If not, why not?

**5) Why a New Hermeneutic?** Why do you think we need a new way of looking at the Bible? Is the old hermeneutic flawed or faulty? Is there a better way? If so, what is it? Is it that there are some things you want to do that the Scriptures will not allow, and you are looking for a way to justify those things?

This is just the tip of the iceberg. Once you change your approach to the Bible, there is no limit to what you will be doing!

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