

Necessary Inferences

by Maurice Barnett

As most Bible students know, *hermeneutics* is a word that refers to the science of interpretation. The word comes from the name of the Greek messenger and interpreter of the Gods, *hermes*, the son of Zeus, or Jupiter as Zeus was called by the Romans. The word “exegesis” is a transliteration of the Greek word that means to lead out, interpret, narrative, description or explanation. To exegete a passage of scripture is to get at its meaning and explain it, applying the guidelines of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics calls for consideration of the original text, grammatical construction of sentences and paragraphs, lexical definition and use of terms in both the original language and modern language, figurative language, immediate and larger context, parallel passages and subjects, original setting when the scripture was given, social circumstances and customs, history of the times, geography of the area under discussion, to whom the passage is addressed or to whom it applies, style of writing and the like. Every bit of information bearing on the passage is considered.

While gaining an understanding of Scripture is not altogether easy, it is possible, just as the Scriptures insist. Being a revelation of the mind of God, it is our only source of determining what God wants us to know and do.

Generally, most people approach the Bible with some presupposition. They may have some doctrinal position that they want to justify. They will pick and choose and twist passages that they think can establish what they have already concluded. Some may filter scripture through what they personally think is reasonable; things should be the way they think they should be. They look at scripture through some established philosophy—The *Empiricist* will only accept what can be determined through man’s natural senses; the *Naturalist* denies the existence of God, insisting that man is alone in the universe; the *Relativist* declares that everything is relative and there is no absolute truth, hence no inspired word of God; the *Determinist* says that one’s character and behavior is determined by environment and upbringing and we have no freedom to change.

All of these views are conclusions reached by people before they ever approach the Bible. With such rules governing their study of scripture, what they get from the Bible is predetermined and there is no way that they will reach an understanding of God’s word. Rudolph Bultmann says—

“Every exegesis that is guided by dogmatic prejudices does not hear what the text says, but only lets the latter say what it wants to hear.”
Existence in Faith, page 343.

As Timothy is enjoined by Paul, II Timothy 2:15, we are to “*handle aright the word of truth.*” “Handle aright” portrays the cutting of a path in a straight direction, or building a road across country straight through a forest of trees toward a goal. One must not be turned aside in his quest by “profane babblings” that lead one astray. vs. 16. I Peter 1:10-11 says—

“Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that *should come* unto you: 11 searching what *time* or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them.”

There was a diligent seeking and searching concerning this salvation. II Peter 2:3 warns of some who would try to deceive others with manufactured stories.

Just a superficial glance at a passage of scripture is very seldom enough to get a full understanding of it, though the meaning of many verses is obvious on the surface. Every Bible reader “interprets” what he reads, perhaps never realizing the way he is processing information. Far too many people are so superficial in their reading that they reach conclusions based on twisted, incorrect or insufficient information, quickly leaping to conclusions that are unwarranted. Others may even construct the right conclusion but from the wrong premises. This contributes as much to error as any other wrong approach. To “interpret” something does not give us the right just to form an opinion that “suits” us.

Subjective is the term usually applied in such cases. It means that which exists in one’s own mind, implying that one is biased in thought versus the opposite of being *objective*, fair and unbiased. Certainly, all exegesis requires one’s own mind and thought processes. But to interpret correctly means that we approach the scriptures honestly with the intent of finding out exactly what they are saying and then be willing to accept what we have uncovered. Mistakes in interpretation cannot be laid to God’s account as some have attempted to do. We are each responsible for understanding.

In this article, we will not cover the entire field of “Hermeneutics.” There are many capable volumes that at least set forth the process of such inquiry, though their applications of the evidence may be faulty in some instances. Many do acknowledge the rules of understanding language but fail to apply them consistently.

The Bible was produced over a period of fifteen hundred years by some forty different writers. These writers came from various cultures, backgrounds, languages and dialects, social standing and practices, idioms and thought processes. Because of this, many will say that such approaches as we are looking at could not possibly be applied to all the Bible and then to our own modern age. What is overlooked in such reasoning is that the Bible is the product of revelation from God given to man in human language. In spite of each language having its own idioms, thought and grammatical patterns, there are still rules of understanding that are common to all languages of whatever age. And, *God shows us in his word HOW to understand what He tells us*. Jesus and the Apostles drew premises from scripture to form conclusions, inferences that nailed down truth. As we will see, *what they did amounts to a commentary on how to understand Bible language*.

I have heard it said by a few preachers over the years that the only way to “preach the word” is by expository preaching. That is, take a passage or several passages word by word, line by line, and expand on what it says. This is distinct from “topical” preaching where one draws on passages from all over the Bible on a particular subject. However, the sermons of Peter in Acts 2, Stephen in Acts 7 and Paul in Acts 13

and 17 were topical and explained scriptures that discussed the subject. But even with expository preaching, one must put passages and premises together to explain the text. Thus, whether topical or expository, that is the domain of inference! When Nehemiah, 8:8, read the law and “gave the sense thereof,” he was explaining to the people what it meant; it was a process of reasoning to conclusions.

In, at that time, an unpublished manuscript sent out on an email list on January 1, 2002, Steven Clark Goad said the following about inferences—

“We could present a catalog of ‘inferences’ that have been bound on others as litmus tests of who is and who is not righteous. We have inferred that only grape juice can be used as a Lord’s Supper emblem. We have inferred that only a cappella singing done congregationally is acceptable to God. We have inferred that if we have potluck on church property we are somehow sinning against all that is holy. We have inferred that black is white and up is down . . . Sadly, these are not logical inferences we have made, they are mostly illogical assumptions . . . Truth is determined by context. The reason I don’t need to wash out my eyes at the pool of siloam is that I am not blind; I am not able to go to the pool of siloam; and the command of our Lord was obviously for someone else . . . Biblical truth is determined by context. When we focus on how to determine context we will be a whole lot closer to truth...”

It should be evident that those who criticize inferences must “use” inferences to try to convince us of their position. Goad must use inferences drawn from premises to determine to whom a command applies. He does this, he tells us, by looking at the facts of context. I don’t know of anyone who denies the importance of context in understanding Bible passages. But by just looking at the context of a verse, one still must determine the premises found in the context in order to reach conclusions. Further, we must understand that the immediate context is not the only context to consider. Though in his paper, Goad denounces approaching Bible understanding by command or statement, example and inference as being what he calls “baloney,” he, himself, appeals to the very same process to authorize his liberal agenda! *He argues in the same manner as those he ridicules and condemns.* This is seen in how he reached the conclusion (an inference) that the command to wash in the pool of Siloam does not apply to him! He constructed an argument with a “necessary” inference! Look again at what he says.

In a recent publication, *Proper Bible Understanding Leads to Christian Unity*, page 53, Ray Downen says—

“Some who think of the gospel as if it were law suggest we must search the New Testament to find justification for every act we perform as Christians. With special interest in Christian assemblies, they speak of ‘commands’ and ‘necessary inferences’ and ‘examples which have the force of commands.’ This method of Bible study is based on the assumption that like the Old Testament, the New Testament is a code of laws.

“These students are apt to think God is much more interested in what we do when we’re together than during the much longer periods when we’re alone with Him or busy in daily life. No such emphasis on activities ‘in church’ is found in the New Testament. The emphasis is on how we live and honor God each day.”

Even the Old Testament was not intended to be just a cold set of rules. “Legalism” was what the Jews made of the Law. Neither is the New Testament just a cold

set of rules but that does not mean there are no rules of conduct, personally or collectively; what some people make out of the New Testament does not negate the fact that it still contains God's rules for us. Further, as we will see in this article, the way God wants us to approach an understanding of His revelation is the same for both Old and New Testaments.

Yes, we are to live and honor God every day, but to belittle "in church" activities as of little importance is to ignore the facts. I Corinthians 11 emphasizes the only proper way of observing the Lord's Supper, "when you come together in the church," as compared to what was to be done "at home." I Corinthians 14 even discusses "in church" rules of using spiritual gifts. And, there are many other instances in keeping with Hebrews 10:25. These rules of together activities are as much a part of revelation as any other. How we attend to whatever God tells us, either personally or as a congregation, is all a part of how we "live and honor God." We dishonor Him otherwise. It is obvious that Goad and Downen have an agenda in which they want to drastically and dramatically change church activities into something in line with their own personal likes.

The problem in using inferences is this: Do the necessary Bible premises exist that produce a particular conclusion? Like the Jews, we may stop up our ears, refuse to see and/or not look at all the facts properly. God does hold us responsible for "handling aright the word of truth." Berkhof says it well as follows—

"The knowledge of God is all-comprehending and is always conscious knowledge. In giving man his word, he was not only perfectly aware of all that was said, but also of all that this implied. He knew the inferences that are deduced from Scripture by unavoidable inference and more largely still the consequences that are deduced from a comparison of various Scripture statements among themselves, were foreseen by infinite wisdom in the very act of supernaturally inspiring the record from which they are inferred: and the revealer not only knew that men would deduce such consequences, but designed that they should do so." (*Inspiration of the Scriptures*, p. 585). Therefore, not only the express statements of Scripture, but its implications as well, must be regarded as the Word of God." *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, page 159.

Sadly, there are many who ridicule this approach as antiquated, of human origin, a creed, legalism, silly, unscriptural and unreasonable, baloney, as well as other even more derogatory remarks. However, a major reason for the ridicule is that it is too restrictive for the critics. There are things they want to do that are not supported by the Scriptures.

Hal Hougey, in his book, *The Quest for Understandable Hermeneutics*, page 102, says that necessary inferences are but a tool of human invention. He claims, as does Goad and others, that God never gave any such process, the Holy Spirit never put His stamp of approval on it and though Jesus told His apostles to make disciples of all nations, He "did not include examples or inferences." It makes one wonder if Hougey ever really read the Bible in the first place. Yet, *his book is loaded with inferences that he wants the reader to accept as truth!*

One of the most recent criticisms, especially on the use of "necessary inference," has come from Michael Casey, a Professor Rhetoric at Pepperdine Univer-

sity. In his 1998 book, *The Battle Over Hermeneutics In The Stone-Campbell Movement 1800-1870*, pp. 268-269, he says—

“For the practitioner of restoration theology in the Stone-Campbell movement, the most serious question this study raises is the validity of the rationalistic restoration hermeneutic. Two challenges face the tradition. The entire enlightenment project and its epistemological foundationalism are under attack and have been discredited in many academic circles. The normative vocabulary of American common sense philosophy has also been discredited. Given the extent that restoration hermeneutics is grounded in the enlightenment and the normative language of Common Sense, can an alternative restoration hermeneutic be constructed?

“The second challenge is that the traditional hermeneutic of command, example, and necessary inference is not found in the Old or New Testament, but is grounded in the human history of Reformed theology, Scottish Common Sense philosophy and logic, and the nineteenth century American culture. It is not a ‘divine’ hermeneutic insulated from the ‘chaos’ of history. If the idea of restoration theology is to remain viable—Eliade and the author believes that it can—what should the hermeneutic be? This is the most serious challenge facing the tradition today? A failure to address this question means that the tradition is now dead, having rejected its purpose and goals.”

One must immediately be impressed with the fact that Casey attempts to construct a necessary inference for his conclusions. It should be obvious that it isn’t possible to construct an argument on any subject without attempting to produce an inference, seeing that an inference is just another name for a conclusion drawn from premises.

Every attack on inferences is made by inferences. One must use his own human ability to reason in order to criticize human ability to reason. Neither can anyone write a book without putting it into a logical form. Every argument that anyone ever makes is an attempt to reach conclusions in a logical manner.

There is no doubt that what is called the “Restoration Movement” was affected by ideas that came before it as well as by circumstances in American society of the time. Certainly, people are prone to react to ideas of others and to their surroundings. *God did that.* Just read the Bible and one will see that.

There has been for several centuries a ferment of ideas determined to depend on nothing but Scripture and a return to the New Testament church. Most such groups were only partially successful. Many inferences people have made are not supported by the evidence. It may be that they have not considered all the data, or they may have twisted the data, consciously or unconsciously, so that it gave them a conclusion that suited them better.

Were the Apostles influenced by those who went before them? Of course. Did they at times react to the circumstances around them? Another affirmative. Did they influence others to obey the instructions they received from the Holy Spirit? That was their task in preaching, Matthew 28:18-20. We have but to read the New Testament to see that this is so. Was this information to be passed on to others by those whom the Apostles taught? That is what II Timothy 2:2 says. Were the inspired scriptures to be what was preached as the guide from heaven? So says II Timothy 4:1-4.

There is no way we can declare that the “hermeneutic” of the “Restoration Movement” is based solely on the Protestant Reformation. Such a position assumes that the role of inferences in human communication did not begin until these individuals appeared on the scene. Whether or not Alexander Campbell, early or late in his work, realized that what he had, himself, been doing in his own reasoning was a valid process of reaching conclusions has no bearing on the necessity or reliability of inferences. The Campbells were just two more humans who reached some right and some wrong conclusions on any number of subjects, even after they recognized that they had been using “inferences” all along.

Inferences are a common part of the everyday life of all of us. Even our legal system depends upon inferences as a basis for justice in court trials. *Black’s Law Dictionary* says of inferences—

“In the law of evidence, a truth or proposition drawn from another which is supposed or admitted to be true. A process of reasoning by which a fact or proposition sought to be established is deduced as a logical consequence from other facts, or a state of facts, already proved or admitted. A logical and reasonable conclusion of a fact not presented by direct evidence but which, by process of logic and reason, a trier of fact may conclude exists from the established facts ... Inferences are deductions or conclusions which with reason and common sense lead the jury to draw from facts which have been established by the evidence in the case.”

In fact, the inference allowance goes further than a “necessary” inference. Black says under “Reasonable inference rule”—

“Under this rule the trier of fact may consider as evidence not only the testimony and real evidence presented at trial but also all inferences which may be reasonably drawn, though they are not necessary inference.”

Of course, Black has no direct bearing on our approach to Scripture other than to understand the general recognition of inferences that establish fact.

In religious history, the recognition of inferences goes back over many centuries before Erasmus, Zwingli or the Campbells. To see this, and simply looking at it from an historical perspective, we will note just a few statements from writers of the early centuries. Here is Clement of Alexandria, from the second century—

“For the highest demonstration, to which we have alluded, produces intelligent faith by the adducing and opening up of the Scriptures to the souls of those who desire to learn; the result of which is knowledge (gnosis). For if what is adduced in order to prove the point at issue is assumed to be true, as being divine and prophetic, manifestly the conclusion arrived at by inference from it will consequently be inferred truly, and the legitimate result of the demonstration will be acknowledged.”
Ante-Nicene Fathers, The Stromata, vol. 2, p. 708.

Or Tertullian—

“The inevitable inference, therefore, as it seems to me, is that we must believe that the princes and powers of the Creator did knowingly crucify the God of glory in His Christ, with that desperation and excessive malice with which the most abandoned slaves do not even hesitate to slay their masters.” *Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 3, p. 789.*

Or Gregory of Nyssa—

“But whether as respects power, or the conception of goodness, or wisdom and imperishability and eternal existence, or any other notion

besides suitable to the nature of Deity, that is found to lie close to the subject of our contemplation, in all he will agree that perfection is the idea to be entertained of the Divine nature, as being a just inference from these premises." *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, p. 911.

Statements like these from the second century on can be multiplied but these are sufficient to make the point. throughout the centuries since the first, no one made an argument, stated a proposition or reached some conclusion unless it was an attempt to construct a necessary inference. It is a terrible misstatement to say that we got the idea of "necessary inferences" from Alexander Campbell who got it from the Protestant Reformation and thus such reasoning is unreliable. We have just seen that such an assertion is not true.

Now we will go back further than the second century for our information. We will go to the Bible. Oh, the term "inference" may not be found in our English translation, but it is found in certain words in the original Hebrew and Greek texts and the evidence is quite extensive.

YOKHAKH—

According to Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament*, pp. 347-348, the range of meanings for this word include the following—

"to argue, to shew, to prove anything...to argue down any one, to confute, to convict...to dispute, to altercation with any one, to argue down, to convince..."

Isaiah 1:18 says, **"Come now let us reason (yokahakh) together saith the Lord."** Of course, God is the one who does the arguing to convince and his hearers are to listen and follow His lead. What we will see is that in "reasoning" with us, God uses necessary inferences.

There are several Greek words that can be defined as "to infer." We find the words used in the New Testament that show it is proper to reason in that way.

SUMBIBAZO—

This term is defined by Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, 30.82—

"to come to a solution or decision, implying a process of putting together different aspects of related information - to conclude, to decide, to infer."

Gingrich & Danker *Lexicon*, p. 777, also says that one meaning of this word is **"conclude, infer."** Here are some Bible applications of this term—

"But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews that dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the Christ." Acts 9:22.

The word "proving" is from *sumbibazo* and evidently refers to *conclude*, or *infer*, from premises. Paul, by inspiration, put together the facts from prophecy and the life of Jesus to prove that Jesus is the Christ, just as Stephen did in Acts 8 or Peter on Pentecost, Acts 2, and what we see in many passages. Acts 16:9-10 says—

"And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There was a man of Macedonia standing, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And when he had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."

The premises for this conclusion are stated for us beginning with verse 6. It is easily understood how they reached this conclusion. It was necessarily inferred.

LOGIZOMAI—

Louw and Nida, 30.9, says—

“to think about something in a detailed and logical manner—think about, to reason about, to ponder, reasoning.”

In Hebrews 11:17-19, Abraham concluded that despite his offering Isaac on the altar as directed by God, that God would raise him from the dead to fulfill His assurance that through Isaac the promise He had made to Abraham would be fulfilled. Verse 19 says—

“...accounting (*logizomai*) that God is able to raise up even from the dead...”

Abraham put the facts together with his faith and concluded that he would not lose Isaac after all, regardless of putting him to death; God would full His promise.

Paul argues the subjects of faith, works and grace in Romans 3. After a considerable amount of evidence, he says in verse 28—

“We reckon (*logizomai*) therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.”

As is usual, the word “therefore” introduces the conclusion to an argument. The word “reckon” reveals the process, the gathering of the premises which he has already stated and drawing the conclusion by a reasoning process.

DIALOGIZOMAI—

Louw and Nida, 30.10, says of this form of *logizomai*, compounding it with a preposition—

“to think or reason with thoroughness and completeness—think out carefully, to reason thoroughly, to consider carefully, to reason, reasoning.”

A Classic use of this term relative to our subject is in Mark 8:14-21 in an interplay of Jesus and His disciples—

“And they forgot to take bread; and they had not in the boat with them more than one loaf. And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. And they reasoned (*dialogizomai*) one with another, saying, We have no bread. And Jesus perceiving it saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? do ye not yet perceive (*noeo*), neither understand (*suniamai*)? have ye your heart hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? When I brake the five loaves among the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. And when the seven among the four thousand, how many basketfuls of broken pieces took ye up? And they say unto him, Seven. And he said unto them, Do ye not yet understand (*suniamai*)?”

Matthew 16:12 adds to this, “Then understood they that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadduces.”

“Perceive” is from *noeo* and means “to think over a matter with care—think about carefully, to consider well,” Louw and Nida, 30.3. The word “understand” is

from *suniami* and means, “to employ one’s capacity for understanding and thus to arrive at insight—understand, to comprehend, to perceive, to have insight into, Louw and Nida, 32.5. Jesus uses all three terms to instruct them. *Suniami* is also found in Matthew 15:10 as compared with *noeo* in verse 17; see below.

The disciples “reasoned” but it was faulty. They had ears so they could hear, eyes so they could see and a memory so they should have remembered experiences. But, they did not carefully consider the facts by employing their own capacity for understanding. There was nothing wrong with the *fact* of reasoning done by the disciples. The problem was the faulty premises by which they reasoned. Jesus rebukes them because they did not get it right to begin with when they should have: He expected them to understand on their own! He had to lay out the data that led directly to the conclusion, a necessary inference; then they understood.

Another instance where Jesus rebuked His disciples for not understanding is Matthew 15:10-11, 15-18—

“And he called to him the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which entereth into the mouth defileth the man; but that which proceedeth out of the mouth, this defileth the man . . . And Peter answered and said unto him, Declare unto us the parable. And he said, Are ye also even yet without understanding? Perceive ye not, that whatsoever goeth into the mouth passeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But the things which proceed out of the mouth come forth out of the heart; and they defile the man.”

Jesus specified the premises and put them together so they could understand. He rebukes them for not doing that for themselves. He told them, “*hear and understand.*”

DIALEGOMAI—

Louw and Nida, 33.446 says the following—

“to argue about differences of opinion—argue, to dispute, argument.”

Acts 17:2-4 says of Paul in Thessalonica, when he went into the synagogue (see also Acts 18:4, 19)—

“...and Paul, as his custom was, went in unto them, and for three sabbath days reasoned with them from the Scriptures, opening and alleging that it behoved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom, *said he*, I proclaim unto you, is the Christ. And some of them were persuaded, and consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.”

The “arguing” that was done in this instance was that Paul presented evidence that Jesus was the Christ, and that involved reaching inferences from various Scriptures. His approach was sufficient to persuade others to accept his conclusions. Notice, also, that what he did in reasoning from the Scriptures was “opening and alleging.” To allege meant to “set before, prove.” The word “opening” is from *dianoigo*, and means—

“to explain something which has been previously hidden or obscure - to explain, to open up, to make evident,” Louw and Nida, 33.142.

Luke 24:32, 45 says of Jesus’ teaching His disciples—

“And they said one to another, Was not our heart burning within us,

while he spake to us in the way, while he opened to us the scriptures? . . . Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the scriptures."

This opening of their minds was done by the opening of the scriptures, by the explanation of their meaning. The whole process was one of reasoning. The same thing happened to Lydia in Acts 16:14 whose heart was opened thereby so that she gave heed to the things Paul spoke: she did what he told her to do, she was baptized, v. 15.

Just the most elementary reading of the Old Testament clearly demonstrates the many commands and statements of God which He expected the Israelites to follow. Violation of some laws would bring death, Hebrews 10:28, so the authority of God's commands are without doubt.

As we have noticed, Isaiah 1:18 says, "come now let us reason together saith the Lord." Psalm 119:104 says, "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way." Gesenius, op.cit., p. 113, says about this word *understanding*, "to be easily distinguished, distinct, manifest; hence to consider, to understand, which depends upon the power of discerning." The reasoning ability of the mind is brought to bear on the evidence.

Leviticus 27:30 and Deuteronomy 14:22 instruct Israel on tithing. In both instances, they were specifically told to "tithe of all the increase of thy seed." Leviticus explains it, "And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord." This referred to whatever produce of seed or fruit that they received. Though it does not specify mint, anise and cummin, these were included in the instruction. Jesus criticized the Pharisees in Matthew 23:23, saying—

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith: but these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone."

Critics of all sorts will point to this as an example of "law keeping" on the part of the Pharisees, that this meticulous tithing was "legalism." They would like to show that Jesus was opposed to such "legalism." But, they misread and pervert the text. Jesus condemned the Jew's lack of justice, mercy and faith. not their tithing mint, anise and cummin. Notice what He says—"these (*justice, mercy, faith*) ye ought to have done, AND NOT LEFT THE OTHER (*tithing mint, anise and cummin*) **UNDONE.**" The Jews understood, by *necessary inference*, that both Leviticus and Deuteronomy were teaching them to tithe mint, anise and cummin, meticulous as it was.

Paul says in I Corinthians 14:34—

"let the women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but let them be in subjection, as also saith the law."

The specific statement, "let them be in subjection," is not in the Old Testament, as such. The fact of woman's subjection to man goes all the way back to creation when woman was taken out of man, I Timothy 2:11-15. Man was first formed, then woman. Woman was made for man, not man for the woman. Adam was to rule over his wife. These facts are demonstrated in many ordinances and

examples throughout the Old Testament, such as the practice of elders, male priests, and the like. In this way, we determine from the Old Testament, not by specific statement but by a necessary conclusion, that woman is in subjection to man in the Old Testament. "The Law" referred to by Paul means the entire Old Testament, including Genesis. Notice that Peter uses this same approach in I Peter 3:1-6. He draws on Sarah's submission to Abraham to make his point concerning proper apparel and conduct.

One of the clearest areas of necessary inference from the Old Testament is in prophecy. In order to understand fulfilled prophecy, it is necessary to put facts together. Jesus told the Jews in John 5:39—

"Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me."

The scriptures bore witness in several ways. Matthew 22:41-46 for instance. He asked these Jews about the Christ, who son he was to be. They answered that He was the son of David. Jesus then asked how it was that Christ was David's son if David called Him Lord in Psalm 110:1. They couldn't answer that. What are the premises? The Messiah was to be a physical descendant of David. But David called Him Lord. How could the Messiah be a physical descendant and David's Lord at the same time? It was because the Messiah would be God in the flesh, but of the physical lineage of David. If the Jews had put the two facts from scripture together properly, as they could have done, they would have known by necessary inference the truth about Jesus.

Though the Jews searched the scriptures, they missed the truth because they had closed minds, prejudiced by prior assumptions. Paul said in II Corinthians 3:14-15—

"...but their minds were hardened: for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remaineth, it not being revealed *to them* that it is done away in Christ. But unto this day, whensoever Moses is read, a veil lieth upon their heart."

The Jews read the scriptures with great zeal, filled with the pride of their religious devotion. Yet, they did not understand and the fault was their own. Acts 13:27 say it this way—

"For they that dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath, fulfilled *them* by condemning *him*."

Today, countless people search the scriptures, frequently and diligently, and still do not understand, "*ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*," II Timothy 3:7. A searching of scripture means nothing unless you do it with the right attitude and in proper manner.

In Matthew 12:23-33, Jesus puts a stop to the Sadducees. He answers their error on the resurrection and nature of man by an appeal to what God said to Moses at the burning bush: "*I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*." His argument hinges on the present tense of the verb God used, "I am." The present tense verb implies that God was still, at that moment of God's speaking, the God of these men, even though Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were all in their graves

at that moment. God is not the God of the dead but of the living, so these individuals were still living, though not alive physically. Not only did that prove the existence of a soul in man but also a resurrection from the dead, Luke 20:37. All of this is taught by clear implication in the very tense of the verb, connected with other premises. Such premises are not expressly stated in the Old Testament but the teaching is there, anyway. Jesus said the Jews were in error, “*not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God.*” He proved that they were in error by *necessary conclusion*. They could have discovered the truth on this, themselves!

Hebrews 7:1-10 is a matchless example of a necessary conclusion. The account of Abraham meeting Melchizedek is very simply stated in Genesis. Yet, from the short meeting between them, we have some facts with far reaching consequences. In two ways, it shows the superiority of Melchizedek over Abraham and, as a consequence, the superiority of the priesthood of Melchizedek over the Levitical priesthood and the end of the authority of the Old Law.

The manner of reasoning is this: First, the passage says that Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, but it is the lesser person who pays tithes to the greater persons. Second, Melchizedek blessed Abraham but it is the greater person who blesses the lesser person. These two statements show that both Melchizedek and Abraham recognized Melchizedek to be the greater of the two. Third, the Jews accepted that Abraham was greater than Israel, the Levites being singled out especially. Fourth, this demonstrates that since Melchizedek was greater than Abraham and Abraham greater than the Levites, that, therefore, Melchizedek was greater than the Levites.

Another premise must also be laid down. God said in Psalm 104:4 that the Christ would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek. This means that since Melchizedek was greater than Levi and the Christ would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek that the priesthood of Christ was superior to that of Levi. The grand conclusion is then made in Hebrews 7:12—

“For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.”

With a simple drawing together of premises based on the meeting between Melchizedek and Abraham, the writer powerfully establishes that the Old Law has been removed and the New one established. The passages that follow that one in Hebrews argue the significance of that fact. Most of the premises are contained in the Old Testament account of Abraham and Melchizedek, a description of what they did, an *example* if you will. The inferences are undoubtedly conclusive because we have the word of an inspired man that it is so. This is a classic example of *necessary conclusion, presented in the Old Testament by the authority of God, fulfilled in the new and then explained by divine revelation.*

In Acts 2:25-31, Peter quotes from Psalm 16, laying down the premise that David could not have been referring to himself because they all could observe his tomb; he had died and was still dead. He then says that David was a prophet appealing to known passages II Samuel 7:12 and Psalm 132:11. These verses foretold that God would set another on David’s throne. He then presents his conclusion, one that necessarily follows, that Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of God to sit on

David's throne at the right hand of God. Since Peter spoke by inspiration from God, his process of arguing here is God's way of revealing information. Notice again the statement of Jesus in Luke 24:46-47 about Himself—

"...and he said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

What Jesus said was "written" is nowhere expressly stated in the way Jesus said this to His disciples. What He tells them is the *conclusion* from the teaching of many statements in the Old Testament.

Several instances say that the disciples "*reasoned from the scriptures*" that Jesus was the Christ. That required the drawing of premises from Old Testament passages and relating them to Jesus in order to show He was the fulfillment. Look at the reasoning of Paul in Acts 17 before the Athenians. He argued the existence of God from several premises; he even used a statement from a heathen poet to get them to understand the nature of God.

In Acts 10:28, Peter says that "*unto me hath God showed that I should not call any man common unclean.*" How was it that God showed this to him? Within the vision Peter received, God informed him that what God had cleansed he was not to call common or unclean. Putting together the events of the messengers from Cornelius, along with the visions and the words spoken to him by God, Peter concluded this important fact, saying, "*Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons...*" vs. 34. There is that word "perceive" again. Jew and Gentile were alike acceptable to God.

God Expects Us To Reason In The Same Manner

We have seen instances where Jesus rebuked His disciples for not reaching the proper conclusion from the facts that they actually knew about or could easily determine.

In Matthew 24:15-16, concerning the signs of the impending destruction on Jerusalem in A.D. 70, Jesus said—

"When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him that readeth understand), then let them that are in Judaea flee unto the mountains."

Jesus said that they could read what Daniel said, put it together with what Jesus said, coupled with what they would see and hear when the time came, the signs, and thus understand what course they should take at that time. Several pieces of data would give them the necessary conclusion and spur them into action when the time came. Jesus expected them to do that.

Paul said in Ephesians 3:3-4—

"..how that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ."

We have already seen the word "perceive" in Mark 8 concerning the disciples of Jesus. The word in both places is from *noeo*, "*to think over a matter with care - think*

about carefully, to consider well,” Louw and Nida, *op.cit.*, 30.3. This required a thinking and reasoning process based on reading what Paul wrote on the subjects.

No one command in the New Testament has my name on it; nothing is specifically directed at me. As we have already seen, we must determine by necessary inference what is applicable to each of us in the particular the time frame of our lives. All figures of speech, symbolic language, sarcasm, etc. require inference to determine the meaning. We must conclude the meaning of the figure or symbol by considering numerous factors to reach an inference. the same for sarcasm. As we have seen, even determining the meaning and application of a specific ocmmand requires inference. We must decide just who is speaking, to whom is it spoken, to whom does it apply, just what is being said and the like. In matters of personal likes and dislikes, we may be permitted to have them in some circumstances but not in others and the rules for determining that are presented in scripture—I Corinthians 6:12, 8:1-13, 10:23-33, Romans 14:1-23. We must apply those verses to the circumstances where we may be. It takes wisdom and sound reasoning to make such judgments. We are capable of doin this and God expects it of us. But let’s do some exercises in this process to see just how it works.

We can easily determine the day on which Jesus rose from the dead. Sabbatarians insist that Jesus rose on Saturday, not Sunday. They say that in each account that reads *“the first day of the week,”* it only says that He had already been raised by the time the first day came; therefore, Jesus rose on Saturday, which supports their doctrine of meeting on Saturday, the Sabbath. Let’s see if this claim is so.

Luke 24:1 does identify the time in that chapter as *“the first day of the week.”* That is important for us to know and remember. Verse 13 says that two disciples were going *“that very day,”* the first day of the week, to a village a short way from Jerusalem. Jesus appeared to them on the way, though they were kept from recognizing Him. The two disciples discussed with Him the events of the last few days in verses 18-21, centering on His crucifixion and death in verse 20. In the next verse they say, *“Yea, besides all this it is now the third day since these things came to pass.”* That is, this first day of the week is the third day since He was put to death. In verse 46, Jesus says: *“Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day.”*

In this way, Luke 24 identifies conclusively that Jesus ws raised on the first day of the week. We only put together the statements that reach an unavoidable conclusion.

Some denominational preachers have insisted that baptism in the name of Jesus Christ in Acts 2:38 is baptism in the Holy Spirit, not water, because of the mention about their receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit; thus, the gift of the Holy Spirit is baptism in the Holy Spirit. However, Peter said at the house of Cornelius, Acts 10:47-48, *“Can any man forbid water that those should not be baptized who received the Holy Spirit as well as we, and he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.”* Putting the fact that the baptism commanded in the name of Jesus in Acts 10 was in water, we must conclude taht the baptism commanded in the name of jesus in Acts 2:38 was also in water. Other premises also strengthen this fact, such

as Holy Spirit baptism was never a command, nor was it for everyone. The baptism that all are to undergo has always been in water, beginning with the baptism of John the Baptist. We can also note that “be baptized” and “receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” are two different things in Acts 2:38, “be baptized AND receive...” Plus receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit would *follow* the baptism in the name of Jesus. In Acts 10, the baptism of the Holy Spirit *preceded* being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

The story of the eunuch in Acts 8 is interesting. He was not understanding what he was reading from Isaiah 53. Philip began with that scripture and preached to him Jesus. As they went on their way, coming to a certain water, the eunuch said: “Behold, here is water; what doeth hinder me to be baptized?” Since the eunuch had made the request, he must have learned of both baptism and water, as the element, from some place. The only way he could have learned it was from Philip. Yet, all Philip had done was “preach unto him Jesus.” We must conclude that in preaching Jesus, we also preach that one must be baptized and that is done in water.

This also sheds light on Philippians 1:15-18. Paul said that some in Rome preached Christ of envy and strife and that he rejoiced at least that Christ was preached. In saying this, he was not referring to just preaching about the person of Christ. Some have insisted that these passages mean that it doesn't matter what anyone believes and practices as long as they believe Jesus existed and died for us. *That*, they say, is all there is to preaching Jesus and as long as they do *that*, nothing else matters! Thus we should praise and fellowship anyone who just believes Jesus is the Christ.

However, Paul is not saying this this group at Rome was preaching doctrinal error. He said that some preached Christ out of envy and strife, and others of good will. Both groups preached the same things. Paul rejoiced that truth was preached but it was the motive of some in doing it that was wrong. Those at Rome preached the same things Philip preached to the eunuch but they were doing it in such a way as to cause problems for Paul. Preaching Christ and preaching Jesus mean the same thing.

We must conclude that necessary inferences are an inherent part of the Bible as such inferences are in the essential nature of human communication. God the Father used that process of reasoning as did Jesus and the Apostles. He expects us to approach an understanding of the Bible in this same way.