

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Make Thee An Ark of Gopher Wood

By Donnie V. Rader

When the world became so wicked that God chose to destroy man by a flood, God told Noah to build an ark to preserve himself, his family and the animals. God said more than just *“make an ark.”* He said, *“Make thee an ark of gopher wood”* (Gen. 6:14). Instructions that were specific had been given. If Noah was to please God he had to follow carefully the directions he had been given.

Noah and his ark of gopher wood have served to illustrate some very important points on authority through the years. Let’s be reminded of some simple points that we learn from God’s instructions to Noah.

God Has a Plan for How Things Are to be Done

God has not left man to serve him without telling him how to do it. God not only told Noah what to do, but also told him how to do it. The command involves what was to be built: not just anything, but an ark. It was to be built of a particular wood: gopher wood. It was to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. There were also directions for a window and a door. God had a plan.

When the tabernacle was to be built, Moses was to make it *“according to the pattern”* that he had been given while on the mount before God (Heb. 8:5). Again, God had a plan.

Solomon was directed to build the temple according to the *“plans”* (NKJV, *“pattern”* KJV) revealed from God (1 Chron. 28:11-12, 19).

Today we must abide by God’s word in all of our service unto him. If God had a plan for the ark, the tabernacle and the temple, surely he has a plan for his church and all it is to do. John wrote, *“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son”* (2 Jn. 9). We must do all by the authority of our Lord (Col. 3:17).

When God Specifies, All Other Specifics Are Excluded

Authority can be general (including anything, method, or means of execution which comes within the class of the command). Authority can also be specific (excluding everything, method, or means of execution that comes within the class, which is not specified, of the command).

When God’s command is left in the generic (i.e., no specifics are given) man may choose any specific within that general command. If God had told Noah to build an ark of *“wood”* (not telling him a particular kind of wood), Noah could have chosen any kind of wood and been within the realm of authority. The command to *“go preach”* (Matt. 18:19-20) would authorize any method of going: walking, riding, flying or sailing. All God said was *“go.”* He did not specify the method of going.

When God has specified, man is not at liberty to choose other specifics. All other specifics within that class are excluded. When God specified *“gopher wood”* that excluded and eliminated the use of any other wood. We can easily see this principle in everyday life. If I were to give you some money and ask you to go buy me some shoes (without specifying the kind of shoes), you would be at liberty to purchase tennis shoes, walking shoes, dress shoes, work shoes or house shoes. However, if I instructed you to go buy me a pair of dress shoes, you would understand that you are not authorized to buy any other kind of shoe. I would not need to say: *“Don’t buy tennis shoes, work shoes or house shoes.”* The specific *“dress shoes”* excludes all other kinds of shoes.

If we can see how that works with buying shoes, surely we can see it in areas of serving God. When God specified

the kind of music that he wanted (“*singing*” - Eph. 5:19), that excluded all other types of music. When God specified the elements he wanted in the Lord’s supper (“*fruit of the vine*” and “*unleavened bread*” - Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23), that excluded the use of any other elements. When God specified the realm of the elders’ authority (to the flock “*among you*” - 1 Pet. 5:2), that eliminated their authority over any other congregation. When God specified those to receive benevolent care out of the treasury (“*saints*” - 1 Cor. 16:1-2), that excluded church benevolence to all others. When God specified which organization is to do the work of preaching and benevolence (“*church*” - 1 Tim. 3:15; 5:16), that excluded any other organization (such as a missionary or benevolent society) doing that work.

Does Specific Authority “Exclude” or “Only Include”?

There have been a few to quibble that we are wrong in saying that specific authority “excludes” anything. They contend that specific instructions “only include” that which is specified. For example, they would say that the command to “*sing*” does not exclude instrumental music, but it only includes singing.

This is a play on words. If the specific command “only includes” that which is specified, then other elements within its class are not included. Thus, they are excluded.

“Exclude” means “1. To keep out, or shut out... 2. To omit from consideration or notice... 3. To put out, expel” (The American Heritage Dictionary 473). When God said “*gopher wood*” that “keeps out” or “shuts out” the use of any other kind of wood. Thus, the command “excludes” other kinds of wood. My instructions for you to buy some “dress shoes” keeps out or shuts out your buying any other type of shoe.

To Use Another Specific or Kind Is to Go Beyond the Authority of God

We cannot go beyond what God has said (Num. 22:18; 2 Jn. 9). The consequences are serious: we do not have God. One cannot justify the use of that which is not authorized saying that it is an “aid” to doing what God said. To use another kind of wood (pine, oak or cherry) to simply aid in building the ark would be to act without the authority of God. Another kind of wood would be an addition (Rev. 22:18-19) and not an aid. To use the instrument of music thinking it would “aid” the singing is to act without God’s authority. Instrumental music is another kind of music, thus an addition and not an aid. One could as well justify putting blackberry jam on the unleavened bread (to make it more tasteful) as to justify the instrument or any other addition to God’s word.

We must learn to respect the silence of God’s word. God’s silence is not permissive. It is prohibitive (Heb. 7:14).

God told Noah to make an ark of gopher wood. He was to do that - no more and no less. We must do the same with the instructions he has given to us. – *Guardian of Truth*, February 4, 1993. ■

By What Authority?

By Joe R. Price

“23 Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?” 24 But Jesus answered and said to them, “I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: 25 The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?” (Matt. 21:23–25, NKJV)

It is not an unreasonable question, except for the fact that Jesus had shown them time and time again that His words and His deeds were by the authority of heaven. Just the day before, in the very place where Jesus drove out the defilers of God’s temple, He had healed the blind and the lame (Matt. 21:12-14). Still, they refused to believe (Jn. 12:37-41). Jesus has given ample proof that He is the Christ, the Son of God. All authority has been given to Him in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). It is your choice whether or not you will follow heaven’s authority by submitting to Jesus in obedient faith. By what authority do you live? Whose authority do you honor and obey; heaven’s or men’s? Choose wisely, for your choice has eternal consequences. Yield to the authority of heaven, and follow the Lord Jesus in all things (Col. 3:17). – *Sword Tips*, March 22, 2016. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist - 925-759-4357

Web Site: www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com - Email: lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com - Phone: 209-365-9250