**NECESSARY IMPLICATION**

Those of us who teach the Bible are, obviously, very interested in “how” teaching is done. And, when it comes to teaching the Bible, we find it imperative to emphasize that “how” on a regular basis. The reason this is imperative is because many will deny clear Bible teaching in favor of their own way (cf. Mk.7:9). In summary, teaching is ALWAYS imparted by ***direct statement*** (facts or commands), ***approved example*** (showing rather than telling), and ***necessary implication*** (something clearly but indirectly conveyed).

For some reason, many have trouble with “necessary implication.” Some will go so far as to deny the validity of such, and call it a “church of Christ tradition.” On one occasion, after a preacher had delivered a sermon on “necessary implication,” a disgruntled member tried to tell the preacher there was no such thing as necessary implication. The preacher replied, “Why any idiot can see that the Bible teaches by necessary implication.” The member indignantly replied, “I don’t appreciate being called an idiot!” To which the preacher said, “I didn’t call you an idiot.” The member then said, “No, but you ***implied*** it.” Then, the preacher drove home his point by saying, “Well, it seems you CAN see an implication when you want to.” What an awesome way to teach the validity of necessary implication! In this article, I want to look at some examples of “necessary implication” from Acts 8.

From Acts 8, we learn some things about what it means to preach Christ. Note that verse 5 says that Philip ***“preached Christ”*** to the Samaritans; and v.35 says he ***“preached Jesus”*** to the Ethiopian. But taking a closer look at the context, we learn that preaching Christ involves the need to be baptized: ***“But when they believed Philip as he preached things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ,*** ***both men and women were baptized”*** (v.12). Why on earth would they have been baptized? Though not explicitly stated, it is clear that they were taught to be baptized! It is “necessarily implied” that preaching Christ includes the need to be baptized (cp. Mk.16:15-16). There is no rational way to avoid this conclusion!

We see the same implication later in the chapter, when Philip ***“preached Jesus”*** to the Eunuch (v.35). For instance, in verse 36, it says “Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the Eunuch say, “See, here is water. ***What hinders me from being baptized?”*** Once again, I ask, why on earth would the Ethiopian have asked this question? The only answer is that the text “necessarily implies” that preaching Jesus includes teaching the need to be baptized (cp. Mt.28:19). There is no rational way to avoid this conclusion!

We also learn that preaching Jesus includes teaching that He is the Son of God (v.35-37). You see, not only did the Ethiopian learn that he must be baptized, he also learned ***“that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”*** (v.37). How else would he have known to make such a confession? From this, we may also infer that the phrase, “Son of God,” must be ***defined*** – and that ***Jesus fits the definition*** (cf. Lk.1:30-35). I say this because the Ethiopian was confessing what he had come to ***“believe with all (his) heart”*** (v.37). In other words, he was fully convinced. There is no rational way to avoid these conclusions!

Finally, we learn that baptism involves an immersion in water (v.36-39). The text clearly says, “See, here is ***water.*** What hinders me from being ***baptized?”*** (v.36). After clearing up that issue (v.37), the text says, “Both Philip and the Eunuch went ***down into the water,*** and he ***baptized*** him. Now when they ***came up out of the water,*** the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away” (v.38-39). The only reason they needed to go down into the water, and come up out of the waters is because he had to be immersed! That would not be necessary if baptism could be done by sprinkling or pouring. There is no rational way to avoid this conclusion!

As you can see, the Bible does teach by “necessary implication.” This should come as no surprise, for that is one of the ways that all teaching is done! Now, let ME imply something: ***If the Scriptures teach that you must be baptized in order to be saved (Mk.16:16), but you have not been baptized, where does that leave you?***

--Lanny Smith