

What is Doctrine?

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 18 January 2010 13:32

It seems that there are some very peculiar notions of what 'doctrine' is. Is doctrine a set of major teachings which can be counted on two hands? Is it possible to hold conflicting interpretations of doctrine?

The Bible tells us that THE WHOLE BIBLE IS DOCTRINE. And, no - we may not interpret it as we wish. Let us see what 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us:

"All scripture (is) given by inspiration of God, and (is) profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

It has been said, particularly by ecumenists and liberals, that 'love' supersedes all other commands of God and is greater than doctrine. This, however, is just a convenient way to crush opposition to error - if anyone opposes unscriptural beliefs, then they are 'guilty' of offending the Spirit. Very convenient indeed! But very unscriptural, for Jesus Himself said:

"If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Thus, keeping the commandments of Christ/God is proof that we love Him. What are the 'commandments' of Christ? They are everything He has ever said...that is, the entire Bible. And that whole Bible says that love is a part of the commandments of Christ. As a part cannot be greater than the whole, it means that love is a part of the entire teachings of God. Therefore, to suggest that love is greater than doctrine is an insult to the intellect as well as being a claim based on an inept knowledge of scripture.

We may summarise a few of the statements on doctrine as follows:

1. Doctrine is the entire Bible...everything in it. Doctrine = teaching.
2. God cannot say anything irrelevant or unworthy. So all scripture is good. Because all scripture is doctrine, no part of it can be of less value.
3. 'Love' is an aspect of doctrine. So, love cannot be greater than doctrine.
4. Jesus made the keeping of His commandments (commandments = teachings = doctrine)

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a test of love for Him. In saying that, He made a doctrinal statement!

5. There are not 'many doctrines' - there is only one, unified doctrine of God. The various teachings of the Bible are merely aspects of that one doctrine.

6. Doctrine can and should, at times, separate brethren from brethren, when some distort the truth to an intolerable degree. Doctrine certainly and infinitely separates brethren from unbelievers. We cannot accept what God hates.

Doctrine, then, is the essence of our faith. Love is a part of that doctrine. Thus to really love God or others is to come to grips with doctrine - the whole counsel of God. Doctrine refers only to declared scripture (ie the Bible). We may only expand on what has already been given - there can be no extra revelations.

There is only one 'doctrine'. In the Bible, the plural 'doctrines' is found only in the New Testament and it refers to false teachings or lies. When God speaks, what He says is automatically perfect and in harmony with everything else He has ever said. He does not need to structure what He says or check it against the whole. He is God and so everything must be immediately harmonious. But the teachings of men and of Satan need constant reworking and intellectual manipulation for it to appear to be harmonious. But it is all nonsense for, as we read in Matthew 15:9:

"in vain they do worship me, teaching (for) doctrines the commandments of men."

That is why Paul instructs us to have nothing to do with the ideas and instructions put forward by men: "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines." (Hebrews 13:9). One way we can be carried about by strange teachings is to insist that we have the right to interpret scripture as we see fit. Just as every man and woman is an instant expert on the economy of their own country, so every Christian thinks he or she is a Bible teacher! With disastrous results! Logic should surely tell us that if there is only one Truth, then there can be only one interpretation. But no - all Christians claim that their own 'interpretation' is correct, no matter what scripture actually says.

One thing alone matters - what does God say? If we speak only what He says, then we are on safe ground:

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"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil the dew and as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass. Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God"

(Deuteronomy 32:2)

Those who learn doctrine are counted amongst the wise (for doctrine is given by the Holy Spirit and is mandatory upon us all):

"The fear of the Lord (is) the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do (His commandments)."

(Psalm 111:10)

Those who do not learn doctrine are fools!

"The fear of the Lord (is) the beginning of knowledge: (but) fools despise wisdom and instruction (or, doctrine)"

(Proverbs 1:7)

Note: See [A-081 Doctrine](#) for a more detailed exposition.

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