

THE RIGHT ROD

When God specifies that which man is to do, he must do it or incur Divine displeasure. Man may not add to, omit, or substitute anything in the place of that which God specifies. The Scriptures abound with illustrations of this principle, one of which is found in Exodus 17:1–7. On their way to Canaan after their miraculous deliverance from Egypt, Israel murmured against Moses and God because of thirst. God told Moses to take some of the elders with him and to smite a certain rock with his rod, which brought forth water.

God specified the rod that Moses was to take with him to the rock and with which he was to smite it: “Thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thy hand, and go” (v. 5). Was one rod as good as another? What if Moses had decided to pick up a stick along the way and use it? What if he had reasoned that he had a rod that he liked better and decided to use it. Doubtless, God would have been as unhappy with Moses as He was with the people for murmuring.

Herein is demonstrated one of the most significant principles of Biblical interpretation: the law of inclusion and exclusion. When God specifies what to do or how to do anything, he simultaneously **includes** all that he desires and implicitly **excludes** every thing else in the same class. When He told Moses what rod to use, he implicitly excluded (without explicitly saying a word about it) **every other rod**. This principle is likewise graphically illustrated (as faithful saints have long taught) in God’s instruction to Noah to build the ark of gopher wood (Gen. 6:14). The specification of gopher wood implicitly excluded (forbade) the use of any other wood.

The case of Nadab and Abihu, who offered “strange fire” before the Lord, also powerfully demonstrates the same principle (Lev. 10:1–2). The fire was not “strange”

and rejected by God because He had explicitly forbidden it. Rather, it was “strange fire” “which he commanded them not” (Lev. 10:1). Thus, although God had not explicitly **forbidden** the fire they offered, it was excluded by the fact that God had specified what kind of fire to use. The **implicit** prohibitions of any other rod, wood, or fire in the foregoing examples were just as forceful and binding as if God had **explicitly** stated them.

God has not changed. Just as one rod is not as good as another, neither is one baptism as good as another. The Lord specifies immersion of believers in water for forgiveness of sins, thereby excluding every other “baptism” (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; et al.). One church is not as good as another. Only the one described in the New Testament exists with Divine approval; all others are excluded (Mat. 15:13; 16:18; Eph. 1:22–23; 4:4; et al.). The Lord specified singing as the kind of music we are to offer in Christian worship (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Any other kind is “strange music which he commanded not.” Men ignore this essential principle to their own eternal peril.

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