

The Government of God

As long as there is carnality in the universe, there must be government. We all have a carnal nature driving us to behave selfishly and hurt others when they get between us and our desire. And as long as that is true, there must be government.

That nature cannot be reasoned with by logic or wisdom, for it doesn't care about logic or wisdom; it cares only about itself. So if there is to be righteousness, that nature must be governed – compelled to fall in line with the will of God through the use of force. Something bigger and stronger than that nature must keep it in check.

All government has this same goal – righteousness. Any government that accomplishes that is a *successful* government; but the government that accomplishes it with a minimum of force, is considered *good* government.

For this reason, the best form of government is self-government. That is where your higher brain functions govern your lower ones, where your will to obey God is able to overcome your desire to please yourself at any cost. When you govern yourself, nothing else need govern you (**1 Corinthians 11:31**).

But when you cannot (or will not) govern yourself, something else must govern you. This government need not be invasive or strict; you may only need a quiet voice whispering “*this is the way, walk in it*” (**Isaiah 30:21**), and that only when you stray from the path. If so, it's all the government God will use.

But if a gentle nudge from God's spirit won't do, then a push may be necessary; if a push is too subtle, a rod will be used (**1 Corinthians 4:21**). If you still resist, the rod will be made of iron (**Revelation 19:15**). If you won't listen to that, there is always the lake of fire.

God WILL have obedience to His law in this universe. And God will use the barest minimum force possible to achieve that end. What you've just read holds the answer to every question you'll ever have about government. But to fill in the blanks, study...

LESSON 39: THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD

To put what I just said in practical terms, read **1 Kings 19:15-17**. There you see a clear principle; three layers of government. The prophet, the spiritual level of government; the king of Israel, the physical level of government; and the Gentile king, the Gentile level of government.

This corresponds as you may have guessed to the three levels of covenant with God; the New Covenant (NC), the Old Covenant (OC), and No Covenant At All (NCAA). If you will not listen to Elisha, then God will try Jehu; if you will not listen to Jehu, God will let Hazeal take over your government.

You can find a parallel in the NT, where God commanded that the incestuous man be put out of the church, “*delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh*” (**1 Corinthians 5:5**); put away from

God's government (Elisha) and into Satan's government (Hazeal). We skipped straight past Jehu since they were in Corinth, a Greek city run by non-covenant Gentiles. Had it been in Israel, they would have delivered him to the judges/priests. If *they* failed, then "*the sword of Hazeal*" would have done the job.

Put in modern terms, if you will govern yourself – great! God need not worry about you. But if you won't, then God's prophet must judge you – whether that's me, your minister, your spouse, or the bum on the street corner; any of us can be used to say "this is the way, walk ye in it" – and if you listen, no more government is needed. If not, then (where applicable) God's church must judge you; if necessary, by putting you out of the church. These are all escalating degrees of NC government – Elisha.

If you persist in your sins, then your nation must judge you; they'll fine you, punish you, lock you up in jail if necessary; then prison; then solitary confinement; whatever is necessary to achieve an acceptable level of righteousness. Of course, their standards are lower because they're only judging you based on the OC – ideally, anyway. In reality, they're a far cry short of that, but then, so was Jehu (he was a lousy king – see **2 Kings 10:31**).

Carrying it one step further, if your nation does *not* judge your sins (say, for adultery which is sadly not a crime in this country) then God must find some other, more righteous nation to judge your nation (and, by extension, you) for your crimes. This is NCAA government, enforced by a non-covenant Gentile nation like Hazeal's Syria. If there is no other nation God can use, well, that's why there was a flood in Noah's day.

This is how government works. But it applies in hundreds of different ways, and firmly grasping it unlocks a surprising amount of information from healing to what an apostle is, to child-rearing, so this lesson and the next two will be devoted to unraveling some of those questions.

THE SOURCE OF AUTHORITY

All government comes from God. Few would dispute that in principle, but practically no one believes it in practice. Who makes kings? **Daniel 4:17**. Who appointed your local sheriff, mayor, etc? **Romans 13:1-4**. Who is the ultimate power on Earth? **Psalms 83:18**. Whom does God give authority to? **Daniel 4:25**. Does God set up the kings in authority in EVERY generation? **Verses 34-35**.

I've said this before but it bears repeating; men are only fooling themselves to think that their democracies choose their leaders; you can't vote a man into office God doesn't want there. Obama is president of the USA because he is the president we deserve. The one who will further God's plan best – whether that's by doing good and keeping the country going, or by driving it into the ground and hastening the end.

In the quote we've already referenced several times, it is God who anoints the men in authority; whether that's a prophet (Elisha, NC), a civil ruler over His old-covenant people (Jehu, OC) or the ruler over the Gentile nations around them (Hazeal, NCAA). God calls your teachers and gives them understanding; God appoints Obama and Queen Elizabeth II and the leaders of all the world governments. (Note: I'll use Obama a lot in this lesson as an example since he's handy and controversial, but any world leader at any time in history will fit the analogies I use).

Those people are GOD'S MINISTERS, according to **Romans 13**. Resisting them is resisting the will of God – not only pointless, but sinful. This is why God said "*Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people*" (**Acts 23:5**). **Because God appointed that ruler! Speaking evil of the ruler is speaking evil of the Authority that appointed him!**

Paul was quoting from **Exodus 22:28**, where the NKJV translates it “*You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people*”. The Bible often uses this type of language to show a causative link; in other words, “*do not revile God BY cursing a ruler of your people*”. Because cursing the ruler curses the Authority that installed him, **saying Obama is a bad president for the country says that God installed a bad president for the country.**

This does *not* mean you cannot say, “Obama did wrong by ____”. It does *not* mean you cannot say “Obama is destroying this country”. But remember that Obama is only doing whatever he does **because God sent him to do so!** And that “*all things work together for good to them that love God*” (**Romans 8:28**). Everything that happens is furthering the plan of God! But, though these sins **MUST** be caused, balance that thought with **Matthew 18:7** – woe unto the man who causes these great national sins!

That isn't speaking evil of the ruler of your people. It's not saying “I hate Obama, I wish he were dead, may God smite him with boils, this nation should rise up and execute that <insert favorite expletive here>”. THAT is wrong, because it shows you don't understand that it is GOD who is guiding the destiny of this country, not Obama!

But note that Obama can be a bad president without being a bad president for this country. In other words, he might be the devil himself but if that's what this nation needs to fulfill God's plan he can be – and is – the perfect president for this country. That's what the right-wing, secessionist, militia-types don't understand. Our nation is evil. Our people are evil. **They are God-forsaking and so they are being Godforsaken.** It would be a sin for God to reward an evil people with a noble ruler. The quality of the people determines the quality of the ruler (**1 Samuel 12:13-15**).

IS THERE A CONTRADICTION?

God is the ALMIGHTY. Not the semi-mighty. By that I mean that God and Satan aren't equal, warring over men's souls. I've said this before too, but it needs said again in this context; is Satan able to hurt those God protects? **Job 1:8-11**. And when God does permit Satan to affect us, are there still strict limits that the devil may not violate? **Verse 12**. Does God sometimes move the limits? **Job 2:3-6**.

So God, by definition, rules Satan. Otherwise, Satan wouldn't have needed His permission to attack Job, nor would he have abided by God's restrictions. This doesn't mean Satan likes it, but there are lines he dares not cross and he knows it. This is a vitally important fact that the world can't wrap their heads around! When God commands the spirits *they obey!* (**Mark 1:27**). Why? **Because God has authority. He is the Almighty. By definition, everything obeys Him. If something didn't, He wouldn't be the All-mighty anymore!**

If that's true though, then why do so many disobey Him? Why are there rebellious angels, if God is allpowerful? Because God isn't TRYING to exert His authority today! If He wished, He could blink and sweep the galaxy away like you brush away a cobweb. But God is trying to REASON with the world. He is ASKING them to obey Him, not TELLING them to obey.

God is allowing us some slack – we can use that free rope to walk with Him unburdened, or, more likely, get tangled up in it and hang ourselves. His authority is absolute, but He has only chosen to set it up at certain extreme limits; like with Job. God made no specific requirements about how or where Satan could harass Job. Only that he was not to touch him, and later, He revised it only to forbid his actual death.

Likewise, God has absolute power over the angels, over life and death, over health and kingdoms, churches and people; but He doesn't exercise it unless He is asked to do so and/or it is necessary. But when He DOES send forth His power, nothing in the universe may stand against it! (**Nahum 1:6**). Today, He isn't even trying to force man to obey – not even a little bit. That's why the world

is only under NCAA rules. Only the grossest sins of Sodom attract His personal attention, and even then only to make them an example for others (**Jude 1:7**).

But when He returns, He will bring more authority with Him and tighten up the laws to OC standards. He came as a lamb last time, merely asking people to follow Him; next time, it will be as a King of Kings, to rule all nations with a rod of iron. Last time, He wouldn't even call fire from heaven (**Luke 9:54-56**); next time, the fire will fall from heaven before He even gets here! (**Revelation 8:7-8**).

This is not a lesson about how big God is. That's understood. I'm saying all this to show you what the fountain of authority is like. That same authority is then divided up among all lesser authorities in the universe. Some beings have more; some have less. **But all authority comes from God. Everything in the universe obeys God.**

Obeying Obama is obeying God – provided you don't obey him when he tells you to *disobey* God (**Acts 5:29**). Obeying the mayor is obeying God. Obeying the sheriff, the dogcatcher – obeying them is obeying God **because they each carry a tiny piece of God's authority. The good as well as the bad (1 Peter 2:18-19)**. So give honor to those in authority; pay your taxes; obey their petty rules (**Romans 13:5-7**).

HONOR THE DEVIL

Satan himself is worthy of honor. Shocking? Certainly. But it is just as wrong to speak evil of Satan as it is Obama. Worse, because Satan has more God-given authority. I know, this is horrible heresy – but see for yourself. Did God anoint Satan (to rule)? **Ezekiel 28:14**. Does Satan have authority over the world's kingdoms? **Luke 4:5-6**. Is he called the “god of this world”? **2 Corinthians 4:3-4**. When Israel served other gods, who were they really serving? **Deuteronomy 32:17**. How does someone become your ruler? **Romans 6:16**.

So anyone you obey becomes your master – your ruler. Speaking evil of that master is strictly forbidden. The world obeys the devil. Worships him, even. Speaking evil of him would therefore be wrong; yet this concept doesn't rest merely on shaky logic. Read **Jude 1:8-9**.

Jude was condemning people who have “...*no respect for authorities, and say evil of rulers*” (**BBE**). And as proof that we should not speak evil of rulers, Jude then cites Michael, the highest-ranking angel of all, fighting against the devil. And as an example of how we SHOULD treat evil authorities, he holds up Michael's example who “*fearing to make use of violent words against him, he only said, May the Lord be your judge*” (**BBE**), or as the World English Bible translates it, he “*dared not bring against him an abusive condemnation, but said, ‘May the Lord rebuke you!’*”

This proves beyond argument that the devil is worthy of the respect of Michael, who is at least roughly equal in authority; how much more respect should humans show him, when even Jesus as a man was “*a little lower than the angels*”? (**Hebrews 2:9**).

Those televangelists who prance around the stage yelling at the devil and calling him all sorts of names are “*bringing a railing accusation against him*” and “*having no respect for authorities ... these speak evil of those things which they know not ... Woe unto them! ... Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame...*”. You should read all of **Jude 1:10-13**, addressed to people who don't respect the devil's authority, but those are the highlights. What else does God say to them? **2 Peter 2:10**.

You don't need to rant and rave at the devil. God created him to be a servant, and if he has rebelled against God, it's God's job to correct him. Who are you to judge God's servant? **Romans 14:4**. If the devil gets in your way, you need only do what Michael did, and say “the Lord rebuke you”.

Much more on this in another lesson; for now, I only want to establish that the devil has authority and that all authority given by God is worthy of respect.

As a final example, Saul was an evil ruler of Israel who had repeatedly tried to kill an innocent David. Yet when given the chance by God (and considerable encouragement from his men), David refused to kill Saul. Why? **1 Samuel 24:6-22**. David had been anointed by God too. David was at least equal with Saul, more, because of his righteousness. But God had anointed Saul. And David, Saul's equal, could not un-anoint him.

Later, God again gave David the same opportunity and again David was encouraged to take advantage of it; how did David say the situation would be resolved? **1 Samuel 26:6-12**. The point was clear – God put him in authority, God could take him out; but David refused to be guilty of his blood. The same goes for Satan, Obama, and your mayor. They are God's problem, not yours. If they get in your way, you need only say as David said “the Lord judge between me and you”, which is the same as Michael saying “the Lord rebuke you”.

CIVIL AND SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

But so far we've made no distinction in authority, and yet there clearly is a distinction in the Bible. An apostle in God's church is a position that God appoints. So is a king. Yet a king does not work for the apostle, nor does the apostle work for the king. They are separate offices, and each should obey the other *in his respective sphere*. The apostle should obey the king's tax laws and the king should obey the apostle about where the Feast of Tabernacles is to be observed.

So there is a difference between, say, the way God appointed Jeremiah (**Jeremiah 1:4-5**), and the authority God gave him (**verses 6-10, 17-19**), and the appointment and authority of Obama. There is a difference in what God expects from each of them, and a difference in how God expects you to listen to them.

Obama does not speak for God; Jeremiah did. Obama does not serve as an example of how you should live; Paul did (**Philippians 3:17, 2 Thessalonians 3:9**). On the other hand, it was not Paul's job to make the world obey, but God's job (**1 Corinthians 5:12-13**) – through his “ministers” like Obama (**Romans 13:4**). Likewise it wasn't Jeremiah's job to tell you how fast you could drive or how long you should go to jail for shoplifting, but it *is* Obama's job – through his own ministers.

The authority of both men ultimately stems from the same place, but is carefully divided into their respective spheres; spiritual authority and physical authority, corresponding to the things of the NC and the things of the OC. Neither man particularly *has* to be righteous in order to fulfill his function, but woe unto him if he isn't! And woe unto those who abuse their authority! (**Ezekiel 34:2-23**).

LIMITS OF AUTHORITY

Men in authority are worthy of our respect and obedience. Whether this authority comes through a civil government like a sheriff, or a spiritual government like a minister. But both types of authority have very clear limits. **All authority comes from God; therefore no one who received his authority from God has the authority to command you contrary to God.**

If Obama tells you to kill for your country, you can't obey him. If I tell you to worship a trinity you can't listen to me. If Obama tells you it is a crime to quote scriptures calling homosexuality a sin, you must disobey him. If Billy Graham tells you that God goes to church on Sunday, you cannot believe him. If an angel from heaven comes down, glowing and working miracles right and left, and commands you to do a single thing contrary to the law of God, you'll be condemned with him if you believe him (**Galatians 1:8, 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12**).

No being in the universe, not even God Himself, can command you contrary to God's law! God's government is a constitutional theocracy; a government where God is the King, but a King subject to the laws of the constitution – in this case, the Ten Commandments. Because if God breaks His law, then He can no longer claim to be “good”, since breaking those laws is the very definition of sin.

Then what is the point of having authority? You either obey God or you don't – men only get in the way, right? Absolutely! But remember the opening lines of this lesson! **If you will govern yourself no man need govern you! It is when you will not or cannot govern yourself that you must be governed by other men!**

If the incestuous man in **1 Corinthians 5** would have judged himself, there would have been no need for Paul to get involved. If the other people in the congregation had judged him, rather than glorying in their tolerance, Paul wouldn't have needed to get involved. But because none of them DID, Paul HAD TO exercise his authority as the apostle of God to put this man out of the church! Even so, he did it publicly, not behind closed doors as all churches do today.

So that is why Paul had authority “to bind and to loose”. Because those in his churches were too carnal, too lazy, or simply too inexperienced to keep their churches free of sin. This, sadly, will usually be the case and that is why God instituted government in the church.

And if Paul *hadn't* used that authority to put that man out of the church **Paul would have borne the blame for his sins!** Does the Bible caution us against being in authority over many people? Why? **James 3:1**. Does the Bible say that you can be responsible for the sins of your underlings? **1 Timothy 5:22**.

If you “lay hands” on someone – we'll explain more about that later, but for now let's just say “grant authority to” someone suddenly, before you know them or can trust them fully... if they abuse that authority YOU gave them, then God will look to YOU for the payment. **You partake of the sins of those you appoint under you!** Does that seem unfair? Then think about it this way...

Suppose you're working halfway up the corporate ladder in a large corporation and your boss gives you a job to do. So if you send the job to an incompetent employee and it comes back done wrong, who will your boss blame? Your underling? Or you?

True, it was your underling that sinned; *but it was you who was in charge*. You could have assigned more people, or more competent people, to the job; *you didn't, therefore he will blame you*. You bear the blame for the sins of those under your authority. Naturally you'll chew out your employee for getting you in trouble – but the damage has still be done. **No matter why, you failed as a leader and you bear the punishment for it, whatever it is.** You can and should pass some of that punishment along to the sinner, but some will always stick on you. Because you also sinned – sinned by not managing your people better.

God's church is little different. If God sends Paul to build a church, Paul should build the church. If Paul wants to hire Timothy and Titus to help, that's fine; if they want to hire others under them, that's fine too – but if one sins, his immediate employer will carry the blame; as will his; and his; and so on. If left unchecked the blame falls on Paul, and if even Paul fails, the reproach falls on *his* boss – Jesus.

DEMOCRACY OR HIERARCHY?

God's government system is not democratic. It is clearly hierarchical. It is obvious from every example in the NT that **God's government is never run democratically**. Did Paul listen to the democratic opinion of his companions? **Acts 20:22-24, 21:3-12**. Was Paul persuaded by their arguments (even when they were right)? **Verses 13-14**. In this case, Paul would have been better off

listening to them; but that's not the point, the point is, he didn't. Paul went his way, and those who were interested in learning from him... followed.

Likewise, Jesus never asked advice or took a vote from the disciples. A few particularly clear examples would be **Matthew 16:21-23** and **Luke 9:54-56**. That was Jesus – our perfect example, and the head of the church. Therefore the authority for the church comes through Him, and this is how He ran things. This is also the example of all the apostles in the NT; all the apostles apparently led around an entourage (**1 Corinthians 9:5**) [“Cephas” is another name for the apostle Peter (**John 1:40-42**)].

The largest objection to hierarchy stems from **Acts 15**; but as usual, the very scripture that raises the contradiction actually proves the point. Paul had raised up churches all over modern Turkey and Greece, and was teaching things that the apostles and Jews violently disagreed with – particularly, the abolition of the law of Moses, circumcision, and the opening of the gospel to Gentiles (**Acts 15:1-6**).

Yet they could not argue that God was with Paul. But neither would they turn loose of circumcision, no matter how persuasively Paul argued. So they were going behind Paul's back sending up men to persuade Paul's converts to be circumcised and do Moses' rituals and become naturalized Jews.

So they called a conference to settle the issue. All the apostles and elders in the church came together to discuss it and Peter – who had personal knowledge of the Gentiles being given the gospel (**Acts 10-11**) weighed in to give his opinion (**Acts 15:7-11**). The entire world jumps the track at this point thinking because of this that PETER was the head of this conference. But keep reading and see who was REALLY the leader of the Jerusalem church!

Paul and Barnabas told their story in **verse 12**, and when they were done, who spoke? **Verses 13-18**. [Note that Simeon/Simon is yet another name for Peter]. And when James was done speaking, what did he say? **Verses 19-21**. James said, “*my SENTENCE* [some translations say “*my JUDGMENT*”] *is...*” That's what a LEADER says. A leader gives his JUDGMENT on a matter after he has heard all sides!

They did not take a vote on the matter. They all had a chance to give their testimony, including Peter and Paul and Barnabas, but it was JAMES who made the *DECISION*. When you just READ this chapter, it PROVES that the church was a hierarchy! It ALSO proves that Peter was *not* the head of the church, which is worth a minor detour to address.

PETER – THE FIRST POPE?

Based on a few grossly misunderstood scriptures, the entire world believes that Peter was ordained the head of God's church, and thus was the first Pope. Many believe there is an unbroken succession of ordinations in all churches that trace back to Peter. You've already read one proof scripture in **Acts 15**, and saw that Peter was most definitely not in charge of the Jerusalem church.

But now look at the main scripture, **Matthew 16:18-19**. This “primacy of Peter” doctrine, as it's called, has justified all the atrocities ever committed in the name of religion; the crusades happened because the Pope, who sat “in the chair of Peter”, commanded the Europeans to attack the Muslims.

The inquisition happened because the Pope, supposedly deriving his authority from God via Peter, commanded the death of heretics – Sabbath keepers like you and me, among other things. All this because God made Peter the head of the church. Or did He? Read the scripture carefully. Is that what it says? Think critically! Are you SURE that's what it says?

Who is the head of the church – Peter? **Ephesians 5:23, Colossians 1:18**. Who is the foundation stone upon which the church is founded – Peter? **Ephesians 2:20-22, 1 Corinthians 3:10-11**. Who is the “Rock” of the church – Peter? **1 Corinthians 10:4**. Who was David’s rock? **Psalms 92:15**. Is anyone else but God “the rock”? **Psalms 18:31**. But are there *false rocks* out there? **Deuteronomy 32:30-32, 37-38**.

Jesus is THE Rock. Not Peter. Jesus is the foundation upon which the church is built, not Peter. Jesus is the head of the church, not Peter. Now go back once more to **Matthew 16:18**. Look at it carefully; you see that everything Jesus *seems* to be promising Peter **in fact applies to Jesus, not Peter!**

All the confusion dissolves with the explanation of a Greek pun. The name “Peter” is translated from the Greek *Petros* meaning “a (piece of) rock”. But the word translated “Rock” later in **Matthew 16:18** is *Petra* meaning “a (mass of) rock”, or “cliff or ledge”. So it is clear that these similar-sounding words mean something different in SIZE. *Petros* – Peter – means a small rock; *Petra* means a massive stone.

Using everything you’ve just read, it is obvious what was being said; to paraphrase, Jesus said to Peter “You are Peter, *a mere pebble*, but upon THIS ROCK, myself, I will build My church”. But because Peter *was* a “chip off the old Rock”, so to speak, Jesus was entrusting him with His authority; but was that authority unique to Peter, or given to ALL the apostles? **Matthew 18:15-20**. Who was in the audience? **Verse 1**. Was that authority later given to all who have the holy spirit? **John 20:21-23**.

Peter was an apostle, and an important person in the church (**Galatians 2:6-9**). But notice that James was mentioned first among the “pillars” of the Jerusalem church. Peter was easily the most impetuous apostle, the most likely to act first and think later; but he was not the head of the church, nor was he the first Pope (nor was there *ever* a first Pope in God’s true church).

Also, it is very likely that Peter never went to Rome. Paul went to Rome, Peter went to Babylon (**1 Peter 5:13**). But remember that Peter’s name was *Simon* Peter. There WAS another Simon in the Bible whom you can read about in **Acts 8:9-24**. This one-time sorcerer was in love with the attention and wanted to buy the holy spirit in order to keep the worship of the people.

Having the same name as the apostle Peter, there is some historical evidence that this Simon the sorcerer – Simon the *magus* in Greek, meaning *magician*, or Simon Magus for short, went to Rome and started the “mystery of iniquity” we call the Catholic Church and was indeed the first Pope.

By pretending to be the *apostle* Simon (Peter), and teaching a false doctrine of “buying your salvation” with money and penance, he could easily have started the first feel-good false Christian church. We know SOMEONE did in the time of Paul, for the “mystery of iniquity” was already at work only 30 years after the death of Jesus (**2 Thessalonians 2:7**). Simon Magus is a likely culprit.

But regardless, Peter never held the preeminent position in the Christian church, except as the most brash and headstrong of any of the twelve apostles. He was sometimes a spokesman for the church, such as in **Acts 2-5**, but so were many others, such as Stephen, James, Philip, etc.

LIMITS TO THE AUTHORITY OF THE APOSTLES

Back in **Acts 15**, notice another major fact that everyone overlooks; look at EXACTLY what James’ judgment WAS: “*WE should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God*” (**Acts 15:19**). James didn’t make a decision about what PAUL should do – he made a decision about what the JERUSALEM CHURCH should do!

Why? **Because Paul derived his authority from God directly, not from James or Jerusalem! (Galatians 1:15-19).** James had no authority to command Paul! Paul was “another man’s servant” to him. Paul had gone to the Jerusalem church to get THEM to stop *sending* people up to trouble his churches! **(Verses 6-7).**

Where did Paul get his authority and his understanding? **Verses 11-12.** Was the Jerusalem church, of which James was the “chiefest apostle”, greater in authority than Paul? **2 Corinthians 11:5.** But neither was Paul greater than them; they held the same office of Apostle, and were appointed by the same God; so they were independent of each other.

Fix this fact firmly in mind; **only those who give the authority can take it away.** If I give you authority, I can tell you where to go and what to do with that authority; but if God gives it to you, what you do is between you and Him. I can offer opinions, even criticize; but ultimately, what you do with it is not my problem.

Authority is pretty much the same no matter how it is set up; a nation, a church, a corporation, a home; authority means that someone is in charge and everyone else listens and obeys. An excellent example of this is **Luke 7:1-10.** Here a pagan Roman centurion had a beloved servant fall sick, and the elders of the Jews came to ask Jesus to heal him. The man was in a position to commission a synagogue for the Jews, so he was obviously a powerful man.

But as Jesus approached, this pagan showed something Jesus had not seen in any Jew, ever – faith in Jesus’ *authority!* He said that Jesus didn’t need to come and perform any ritual over his servant. Because this man UNDERSTOOD AUTHORITY. He knew that when *he* sent a man to do something *HE DID IT!* **And he knew if Jesus had the power to heal this man, He only needed to say the word and SOMEONE WOULD DO IT FOR HIM!** Whether Jesus came in person or not!

The Jews wouldn’t believe unless they had a sign (**John 2:18, John 6:30, Mark 8:12, 1 Corinthians 1:22**). But this pagan Roman *impressed* Jesus, and not many people did. Because he understood that authority is ABSOLUTE. You either ARE in charge, or you aren’t. If you ARE, then you need only say, “Go”, and those in authority under you go! But if you aren’t then you have no power to do anything, so it’s a moot point! Either way, a sign – such as anointing with oil, making a loud prayer, rubbing a paste of figs on the chest – is irrelevant. Jesus often did those things for those with weak faith, but what impressed Him was that this man didn’t need any of those things to believe!

If you believe in Jesus, **then you must have faith in His authority as well!** And if He gives that authority to someone else, then that person has the power to speak to you as if Jesus Himself were speaking to you! **(2 Corinthians 5:20).**

THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH

You learned in Lesson 26 that technically “the church” is everyone on Earth who has been called by God. But when an area has a number of people they naturally want to, and are commanded to, assemble together (**Malachi 3:16, Hebrews 10:25**). This then becomes known as the “church of God *at* Corinth”, or Jerusalem, or Dallas, or wherever.

While the church is scattered, the church has no real authority because each person is independent; what they do is their business, and their sins don’t really affect anyone but themselves, so it’s not really anyone’s business. But as more and more of them gather together, their sins do affect others in the church; and when that happens the collective church has a responsibility to keep itself clean **(1 Corinthians 5:13).**

There is nothing wrong with the Church of called-out ones being scattered and lonely across the globe. **In many ways, it is the best type of church.** The people govern themselves and their

relationship with God is uncluttered by anyone else's. It's a great system **for those who have ears to hear God!** For those who will govern themselves it works fine! But in practice, very few are able to keep themselves clean, keep themselves inspired, and continue to learn the truth on their own.

You have already learned it is a lonely way to go through life, and it helps greatly to have a support group. People to "provoke you to love and good works", people to judge you for your sins when you get too far off the path; people who provide a family for you after you've offended yours by obeying and speaking the truth. And above all, people to share new truth with you.

At this moment [opinion alert!], I believe all true Christians are in this independent state. There is no single organized group that I can point to and say "these people are true Christians, with the authority and power of God; worship with them". Not because I haven't looked! Not because I haven't visited dozens of Sabbath-keeping churches! But because each of them failed the test of antichrist, and many other tests besides.

I don't know of anyone but myself who is "*the voice of one crying in the wilderness*", saying "*prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight*" (**Mark 1:3**). And I'm not doing a very good job of it; but I'm doing something. I don't presume to claim to be the only one on Earth doing this; only the only one I know. There may yet be 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to the false Jesus, but I haven't met them (**1 Kings 19:18**).

So while this independent state is fine, and in many ways it is the best form of church because it makes the strongest type of Christian, it also has weaknesses. Because while it makes the strongest Christians, it also makes the fewest of them. It is easy for them to be drowned out by the babble of Babel, the hundreds of millions of false Christians out there who babble-on (pardon the pun) about *their* Jesus.

And on a purely intellectual level, there is a lot to know. A lot of true understanding, true history, and true science to research. A lot of worthless dirt must be sorted through to find the gems of wisdom. And so it is natural that, when enough people who love God are found, they naturally tend to aggregate into a group; and since that group will inevitably be composed of partly (or mostly) carnal people, it is equally inevitable that government must exist.

And it is primarily this organized church that this lesson is about. It may not be relevant to you for years, unless God decides it is time to build a larger organization and calls a man to do so. When that day comes, you need to understand how it works and what will be expected of you. If not, you'll use this knowledge in the millennium.

WHY MUST THE CHURCH BE ORGANIZED?

The problem is outlined in **Romans 10:13-15**. Like it or not, God has to use men to build churches. It's a beautiful theory just to have God working with millions of independent people, but without truly miraculous power being used in every case, God can't get most people to listen. And the use of such power would often ruin the very thing He wishes to create.

Be honest; if it hadn't been for this correspondence course which God had written by an uneducated, unrespected, irreverent and irreligious youth, would you have learned even a fraction of what you've learned? Without God miraculously downloading information into your brain, how would you have learned these things?

Without some man to challenge your traditions and superstitions, some man to force you to examine your long-cherished dogmas, would you really have looked into heaven and hell, the trinity, Sunday, or the law? Why should you – everyone "knew" beyond a doubt that those things

were true! So how would you even know to ask the questions “without a preacher”? And how would you have believed the truth you never would have thought to look for?

So like it or not, having a preacher is often a necessity. Having a church organization to help that preacher is *not* necessary, but it *is* if the work is going to reach tens of thousands of people. And when that happens, they’re going to want to associate; and when that happens, being human, they’ll still be mostly carnal; that will produce problems, and that will require government. And that government must rest in the hands of those whom God will hold responsible.

THE BEGINNING OF GOVERNMENT

In the Garden of Eden, God said no word about government until after the first sin. Then what did He say? **Genesis 3:16**. Eve was not subjected to her husband before that moment. But when she proved that she wouldn’t govern herself, God placed her under Adam’s rule. Not that his rule was perfect – but we’ll talk about that in a few more lessons.

Meanwhile, and similarly, how was Israel governed when they first entered Canaan? **Judges 17:6**. Who was their king? **1 Samuel 12:12**. Why did they reject God as their king? **1 Samuel 8:7**. So at first, Israel was independent; each man “did that which was right in his own eyes”, just as the independent church does.

But they wouldn’t let God rule over them, so God tightened the government; first with a loose government under the judges, but when that wasn’t doing the job the people demanded a king – and God accepted, because that was the next logical step. Tighter government was needed. And the monarchy yielded much better results for much longer than the judges did – at least in Judah, where David’s children ruled.

Before this, government was not mentioned at all in Egypt. They were supposed to obey God; but when obedience out of love was lacking, God settled for fear (**Exodus 14:31, Deuteronomy 4:10**). But when they wouldn’t fear God (**Deuteronomy 5:29**), choosing Moses instead (**Exodus 20:19**), God gave them Moses and gave Moses authority so they would at least fear *him* (**Numbers 12:8**).

Later, God wanted them to listen to Joshua as they had listened to Moses. How did He accomplish that? **Joshua 3:7-4:14**. God magnified Joshua through the miracles and power He gave him, and the people FEARED and OBEYED him. Just as they feared and obeyed Moses; which had never been mentioned in Egypt, but as the people rebelled, stronger government, with more power and authority, was required.

Finally, and more to the point, in the early church the apostles were given no particular authority. They were men whom God gave great understanding, but no particular command to obey them was given. Everyone considered each other, the apostles as well, to be equals, except in measure of understanding (**Acts 4:32-35**), just as Jesus told them “*all of you are brethren*” (**Matthew 23:8**). But, like in Eden, that age of equality and brotherhood was destroyed – and in the same exact manner. Read **Acts 5:1-11**. And what was the aftermath of that sin? **Verses 12-13**.

From that point the apostles were *magnified* in the eyes of the people, just like Joshua had been – and for the same reason. They were placed on pedestals, separated from the people by fear of their *power* and authority. This marked the beginning of authority in the church, the first time that **fear** was used in the New Testament as a tool of authority. What was that fear good for? **Psalms 111:10**.

Until that point, no one NEEDED fear to obey God! No one NEEDED to be afraid of the apostles to respect and learn from them! But Ananias and Sapphira proved that there was carnality and evil in the church, only weeks after Pentecost. And then it was necessary that people fear to do evil; fear to “lie to the holy spirit”. But whom did this fear affect? **Romans 13:3**. Why did God give the apostles that authority? **2 Corinthians 10:8**.

The authority God gave to the apostles silenced the worst of the petty dissension in the church; the worst of sins were managed and it created a happy home out of a bickering mob for a long time. It gave the people someone to listen to, someone to trust, and allowed the church to teach a great many people much faster than the independent way; but it came with a high cost.

THE STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT

In the Old Testament, the structure changed several times. God used different forms of government at different times. Yet for all their differences, they were strikingly similar. From Adam to Moses, it was a simple patriarchal system; Job (who lived several hundred years before Moses) offered sacrifices for his children (**Job 1:5**). Abraham offered sacrifices to God several times; and Sarah obeyed him and called him “lord”, which Peter holds up as an example for the NT Christians as well (**1 Peter 3:6**).

Under this system, the man was head of his house; subject to the oldest living male in the family who made decisions about matters affecting the entire family (**Genesis 42:1-4** for instance), which might be dozens or even hundreds of people. The patriarch was also apparently the priest for the tribe/family.

As the nation grew after the Exodus, God set up a system of semi-patriarchal government. First in authority was Moses, the civil ruler. Second in authority was Aaron, the high priest or spiritual ruler (**Exodus 7:1, Exodus 12:50**, etc). Next came the twelve princes who were over the twelve tribes in **Numbers 7:2**. These carried on the patriarchal role, but divided into twelve individual patriarchs under Moses. These princes are mentioned again in **Numbers 17:2-11**, where they were competing with Aaron for the priesthood. They lost, but it shows that these twelve were *more spiritual than civil leaders*.

In **Numbers 18:1-9**, God told Aaron that he and his sons were responsible for any iniquity that happened. To avoid bearing the blame *they must keep it from happening in the first place!* How? **Malachi 2:7**. It was Aaron’s job to manage the priesthood and keep it and the people holy; if they weren’t holy, God would lay the blame at his feet – so he’d better keep them holy!

God also instituted seventy elders to help Moses (**Numbers 11:16-17**). What was Moses’ job? **Exodus 18:13**. This is the job of a civil ruler; Moses was complaining about the workload (**Numbers 11:11**), so God gave Moses these seventy elders to help with the judging and other *physical* leadership that needs done in a nation of 2 million. Under them were various layers of captains of fifty and hundreds and so on (**Numbers 31:48**), and under the twelve princes were the heads of the houses that made up each tribe (see **Numbers 3:24, 30, 35**, etc).

A simple chart of this government is on the right; at the top is the Father; then Jesus; a split into Moses and Aaron, with Aaron subordinate to Moses; twelve princes to help Aaron, and heads of each of the major families unto them, and so on; and seventy elders to help Moses, and captains of thousands, hundreds, fifties, etc, under them.

Civil	Spiritual
The Father	Jesus
Moses	Aaron
70 Elders	12 Princes
Captains of 1000’s, etc.	Heads of Families

After they entered the Promised Land, Joshua took over Moses’ job and Eleazar and then Phinehas took over Aaron’s job. The rest of the structure continued to work the same (**Joshua 22:30** for instance). An unbroken line of high priests continued to function as spiritual leaders until 70 A.D. and the destruction of the temple. But the job of Moses and the seventy elders was to JUDGE the people.

Remember what **1 Corinthians 11:31** said – if they judged themselves, they wouldn't need judged! If they obeyed the priests, no one would need to FORCE them to be righteous. So judges came and went over the next 500 years or so after the Exodus, but when that obviously wasn't working, at their request, God set up a king. This really wasn't as big a change as people think; it was really the same form of government, just tighter.

The main difference was instead of occasional judges like Moses, Jephthah and Gideon, now we had hereditary kings who did the same job – to judge among the people (**1 Kings 3:16-4:1**). The priests continued to do the same job as before, subordinate to the king just as they had been subordinate to the judges and as Aaron was subordinate to Moses.

We know enough about the period to know that the basic methods of government followed the same pattern; for example **1 Kings 4:7**, **1 Chronicles 25:5-10**-etc, **Ezra 8:24** and **Judges 9:2**. Then came the NT church. Did the pattern of government really change? You can judge for yourself in a moment.

NT GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

God lays out the NC government clearly in **1 Corinthians 12:27-31**. What is the foundation of the church? **Ephesians 2:20**. And by whom does He raise up churches? **Ephesians 4:11-12**. Without getting too bogged down into the details, it is clear that Apostles are first in authority. Second are prophets, third are “teachers”, and then everyone else seems to be under that somewhere.

In the second version, the third slot is for evangelists. The Greek word literally means “a bringer of good tidings”, and what does a “teacher” teach, if not the gospel – which is literally “the good news”? Thus evangelists and teachers are different names for the same office.

Under them is listed a number of different jobs, which don't seem to be in a particular hierarchy, just under the first three offices. These people are unquestionably involved in the spiritual aspects of the church **but the church has a “civil” component as well!**

Read **Acts 6:1-7**. Note that this is right on the heels of the Ananias and Sapphira incident; sin begets sin, and as their sin caused the office of the apostles to be magnified, this new sin of showing favoritism to Jewish widows over Greek widows now caused a new layer of government to be created; for if the people would not manage themselves righteously, those in authority must see to it that they are governed for the good of all.

We had twelve apostles; now we have seven deacons. The whole purpose of creating this new group of people was to manage the civil affairs of the church; today, that would correspond to bookkeeping, tithe managing, hall renting, printing booklets and lessons, and so on. So that the apostles – the spiritual leaders – could be free of the headache and focus on teaching the gospel.

You should notice the word “deacon” is not used in Acts at all, much less in **Acts 6**. It has always been accepted that those seven were the first deacons, and I tend to agree – but I always question anything not explicitly stated.

Paul makes a clear distinction between two main offices in a typical church group in **Philippians 1:1**. Here Paul mentions three groups; saints – that is, “normal” members; bishops; and deacons. Later in **1 Timothy 3**, Paul makes a clear contrast between the requirements for the two main offices; bishops (**verses 1-7**), and deacons (**verses 8-13**).

The requirements are very similar, the primary differences being that bishops are required to be “apt to teach” and “patient”, both things a spiritual leader needs more than a civil; while the deacons are required to be “faithful in all things”, which is something you would want from someone who manages the church's money.

If you're paying close attention, you'll notice the government of the church closely mirrors the government of the church in the wilderness under Moses (**Acts 7:38**). There were Moses and Aaron, "God" and his "prophet"/high priest (**Exodus 7:1**), corresponding to the Father and His Prophet/High Priest, Jesus.

Under Moses to manage the civil affairs of the nation were *seventy* elders. And in the NT, we have *seven* deacons over the civil affairs; probably because the church was too small to need seventy. Under Aaron to manage the spiritual affairs were twelve princes, heads of the twelve tribes. Here we have Jesus' twelve apostles who are promised thrones judging the twelve tribes (**Luke 22:30**).

So the church's government really isn't much different from Israel in the wilderness after all. The main difference is that in the wilderness, Moses and the seventy elders outranked Aaron and the twelve princes; which is what you would expect from an OC church designed to produce only physical fruits.

On the other hand, in the NT church the twelve apostles outranked the seven deacons. So now the spiritual, not the civil, leadership has the final say. And that is what you would expect from a NC church intended to produce spiritual fruits.

APOSTLES

With that overview in mind, now we need to go through these individual offices. Starting with the top – what IS an apostle? The word is copied from the Greek *apostolos*, which literally means "he that is sent", or "one sent with orders". So in that sense, if I were to send you into town to buy me something, you would be my apostle for that mission. As always, the word has no special religious meaning, no sacredness about it. It's just a word, like "baptize", "church", and "pray".

So when you read the word "Apostle", you should think "One sent [by someone] [to do something]". Everyone knows there are thirteen apostles in the Bible; the twelve disciples minus Judas Iscariot makes eleven; then a new twelfth apostle (**Acts 1:15-26**). Then later Paul was sent by God personally to go to the Gentiles, **and since he was sent, he was an apostle!** Since that's all the word means! In the Biblical sense, it means "one sent by God [to do a certain job]."

Any man who derives his authority directly from God and whom God sends to do a task is an apostle. Paul did not get his authority from Jerusalem (**Galatians 1:15-17**). Likewise, Jeremiah did not get his authority from the kings or priests of his day – he was called by God and sent to do a job directly (**Jeremiah 1:4-10**). In that sense, Jeremiah was an apostle – although, since that part of the Bible was written in Hebrew, it didn't use the Greek word *apostolos*.

EVANGELISTS/TEACHERS

We're going to skip prophets for a moment, and jump straight to #3, evangelists. What was the goal of God's system? **2 Timothy 2:2**. Is that what Jesus did? **John 17:12**. Jesus took God's words and committed them to twelve faithful men. Well, eleven faithful men anyway. But then those apostles were supposed to go off and gather disciples of their own and commit the gospel to those faithful men; who in turn were to do the same.

Were their converts considered children of the apostles? **Titus 1:4, 1 Timothy 1:2**. Did Paul teach the church as a father would his children? **1 Thessalonians 2:11**. Did Paul think of himself as their father? **1 Corinthians 4:14-15**. It was through Paul that God called them and taught them the truth. Paul – through the gospel – had begotten these children in Christ. Thus, they were his sons.

So when Timothy and Titus brought the gospel and converted others, then they became *their* sons in the faith, and Paul's "grandchildren". The point of this, is that *the patriarchal system never died, it just changed*. The man who brought you the true gospel should be treated as you would treat a

father. The man who taught the man who taught you (or the man who taught him, etc.), is the patriarch – if God sent him, then he could be called the apostle. Then Christ is above him. The Father above Him.

So the patriarchal system never ended. The NT church was the same style of government as Moses', which was the model for the judges and the kings. **And now you see that all of those people were just camouflaged patriarchs.** Did Moses feel like a father to the Israelites? **Numbers 11:11-12.** He wasn't happy about it, because they were "problem children" to say the least – but he was their father.

Was Elisha the prophet a spiritual "father" to the King of Israel? **2 Kings 13:14.** Was Elijah the prophet in turn Elisha's metaphorical "father"? **2 Kings 2:12.** Was Deborah (the only female judge) a mother to Israel? **Judges 5:7.** Did David call king Saul his father (when in fact his father was Jesse)? **1 Samuel 24:11.** So in that sense, the patriarchal system never died; it hardly even changed.

In an interesting side-note, read **Exodus 20:12** and **Matthew 15:4.** Your father is your patriarch. You should honor him, and "not speak evil" or "curse" the ruler of your family; the punishment for which is death. God loves patterns (**Hebrews 8:5**). And what applies on one level always applies to all levels of the pattern.

So look at the layering of "types" here, as you often see in the Bible; home patriarch, immediate family patriarch, tribal patriarch, church patriarch, and national patriarch. These are all types of the divine Patriarch, whom we call "Abba, Father" – and all of whom carry some small piece of His authority.

It is wrong to curse the high priest for precisely the same reason it is wrong to curse your father, because ultimately in either case you are cursing the authority who made them your father, priest, king or apostle – God the Father. Likewise you should honor all these offices the same way you honor your father or your Father; by respecting the authority God gave them, obeying them when they command you according to the law, condemning them for their sins, and if you must confront them "bring not a railing accusation against them", but say only "the Lord rebuke you", or "the Lord judge between us".

ABUSE OF GOVERNMENT

Most pieces of truth can be abused, and this one more than most. People have been abusing government ever since ancient kings claimed to be descendants from God Himself while leading people to serve false gods. So I need to qualify what has been said by giving you the flip side of the coin.

You should respect authority; righteous or otherwise. You should obey righteous examples, and learn truth from those God sends to teach it. But these offices are not quite as cut and dried as men tend to think. Nor are their spheres specifically limited in the same way.

Some of the offices in the Bible are life-appointed titles, like "apostle", because if you're "one sent", then nothing will ever change the fact that you *were* sent. You will always be an apostle. Even if you sin and start to lead people away from God instead of towards Him, you'll still be an apostle. Just as Saul was still king after he became evil. He was still "the anointed of God". But that does NOT mean just because of his title he should be followed after he turns and does evil!

Just as it is wrong to say "Obama is a so-and-so", it's wrong to revile an apostle or even to call a wicked high priest names (**Acts 23:1-5**). But it is ALSO wrong to let them do evil and keep silent (**Psalms 15:4**). If a wicked high priest smites you without cause, what should you say? **John 18:22-23.** If a minister in God's church is evil and is abusing his authority, what should you do? **3 John 1:9-11.**

You are not to follow evil (Exodus 23:2); no matter how much authority that person may have once had, or may still have. No matter how many miracles you've personally witnessed; no matter how much authority and power he wields, NO MAN has authority to command you contrary to the Bible. So you should use **Matthew 18**, and try to "*gain your brother*". If that fails, provoke those who follow him in the congregation to "*love and good works*" (**Hebrews 10:24-25**).

If that fails, vote with your feet, saying "*I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked*" (**Psalms 26:5**). **The purpose of authority is to help you FIND God. If it starts to hide God from you, then you have outgrown that authority.**

THOSE WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE

On the other hand, while you are under that authority you must obey it as long as it doesn't contradict God's law. Those foolish people – and there are many – who say "no MAN is going to tell ME what to do!" are wrong for so many reasons. First, that attitude is pure unadulterated pride, which God hates above all things (**Proverbs 6:16-17**).

Second, a person who won't learn from another man won't learn from God either (**Luke 16:29-31**). You have to SUBMIT yourselves to one another to learn (**1 Peter 5:5**), and God resists those who refuse to do so.

And third, by refusing to submit yourselves to the authority of those over you, *you rob yourself of tremendous benefits and opportunities!* Being chief in authority – having "no man" in a position to tell you what to do – is a lonely, stressful, difficult position to be in. And if you do it right, it means "*you are the servant of everyone*" (**Mark 10:44**). If you think about it, the only truly free position is to be lowest in authority – thus, in a sense, only the lowest servant is truly servant to no one.

But besides that, you derive great benefit from those in authority over you *because as long as you are under someone's authority, they bear some of the blame for your sin!* In the wilderness, when Israel sinned, those under twenty were not held responsible (**Numbers 14:27-35**). God blamed the adults and not the children. Not because the children hadn't sinned! Not because the teenagers weren't bratty and obnoxious and rebellious too! **But because their parents bore the blame because it was their parents' choice to sin, and not theirs!**

The children were under their parents' authority and had no chance to make decisions, good or bad, under that authority. That's what authority means! **So when the nation as a whole was given a death sentence, they escaped! Because as the lowest in authority, only they were free of the blame of sin!** Likewise in the NT church, Paul cautioned Timothy not to "lay hands suddenly" on someone, until he was SURE he could trust him, lest he be "partaker of other men's sins".

If you leave your oldest child to baby-sit his siblings, and return after a few hours to find the house torn apart, who will you look to for an explanation? Will it not be the one you left in charge? Surely ALL will be punished, but who will receive the GREATEST condemnation? (**James 3:1**).

Likewise, if a nation is sinful, God looks to the ruler He placed in charge. While the whole nation will be punished, the king will bear the brunt of God's wrath. If a church is sinful, He looks to the man who carries His authority to lead the church. If a home is sinful, God looks to the person He placed in charge of that home for an explanation – and for punishment. He looks to the head of the house, no matter what size the "house" may be – the patriarch is the first to be blamed.

Back in **Genesis 3** after eating the forbidden fruit, who did God look to first for an explanation? **Genesis 3:9-11**. The man he left in charge (**Genesis 1:26**)! And Adam passed the blame, so God went to the second-in-command to place blame (**Genesis 3:12-13**). She in turn passed the blame to the devil, who was third-in-command, since Adam and Eve had no children yet. He had no one to blame, so the blame stuck on him.

But notice then, God went back and handed out punishments to all three of the sinners (**verses 14-19**). And it was the head of the house, the chief ruler, the man He had left in charge, who received the greatest punishment – which is as it should be.

Returning once more to the baby-sitting analogy, would you leave your oldest child in charge of his siblings **but not give him any authority to enforce your orders? Would you say** “if there is any trouble, I’m going to hold YOU responsible!” without *ALSO* giving him the *authority* to ENFORCE your orders? Would you not tell the other children to obey their older sibling, and that to disobey him is to disobey you? Of course you would!

When God gives a person responsibility *He also gives them the POWER to do their job properly!* And when God gives a person authority **He expects them to keep their sphere of influence righteous – or God will take justice out of THEIR hide for the sins of their people! (Ezekiel 3:18-21).**

When God calls an apostle or sends a prophet to do a job, if they do a bad job then they will be held responsible for the people they failed to save. If they do a good job, then whether the people listen or not, God rewards them (**2 Corinthians 2:14-16, Ezekiel 2:5**). And because God will hold the apostle responsible, it is only right that the apostle has the last say in how the church is governed; for if he does a bad job, God will blame him, not you; and if you don’t like his rulership, vote with your feet.

To those under authority, no scripture sums it up better than this command in **Hebrews 13:17** “*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you*”. Make their job as easy as you can, for – assuming they are doing their job correctly – “*they watch for your souls as they that must give account*” – **they must answer to God for YOUR sins that happen under their leadership!** You should appreciate that!

“BUT I’M NOT A MINISTER”

If you are a part of the first resurrection, your job will be to be a king or a priest in the world tomorrow, leading thousands, perhaps millions into the truth of God. Whether or not you are a preacher today, you have the responsibility to act like a child of God and be the light of the world.

Dozens of times throughout these lessons I’ve made references to preaching and speaking the truth. And you may think “well, that’s fine for preachers, but I’m just a lay-person, that doesn’t apply to me”. But it does. The world has neatly divided their churches into those who teach, and those who merely pay and pray. But it really isn’t like that at all. There *are* certain jobs in the church that are given to certain people; but isn’t the ENTIRE CHURCH supposed to be teachers? **Hebrews 5:12**.

The ministry in God’s church, if and when it is an organized one, has the authority and responsibility to oversee the administration of **Matthew 18**, to keep the church clean and to teach the truth, to manage and distribute tithes, and so on. But unlike in the world’s churches, each and every member has the responsibility to see to it that their officers are speaking the truth; ministers should not be lords over the congregation (**Luke 22:25-27, Matthew 23:8**).

On the other hand, God’s true church is not a democracy – God appoints the leaders, not the people. **But the ministry of today’s false Christian churches do NOT work for God. They work for the people!** They are voted into office or chosen by elders of the church or hired by corporate offices. But in the true church, God appoints His ministry – by giving them wisdom, signs, and teaching them righteousness. They may appoint others under them; but it is decidedly not a democracy, for carnal people will NEVER vote someone into office to discover their sins and make them feel uncomfortable!

But I cannot say often enough that no one in the church, not even Jesus Himself, is above the Bible. Every member has the responsibility and the right to point out any sin that has not yet been corrected by someone else. There is no “that’s just the minister’s job” in God’s true church. You saw it, you understand it’s wrong, that makes it your job – and it means God will look to you if you didn’t do something about it! (**Leviticus 19:17, Ezekiel 3:16-21**).

ROLES AND TITLES

The world’s churches are hung up on titles; on being anointed priests, evangelists, bishops, ministers, apostles, popes, or whatever is next up in authority and garners them more praise from men and power and influence in their carnal church.

But most of the titles in the Bible are less titles in the normal sense than jobs that need done. It’s like when I build a house; one day, I’m the plumber. Another, I’m the electrician. Another, I’m the roofer. One person; many jobs; I do the one most needed at the time. Sometimes, several at once.

So likewise in the church, most of the titles like bishop, priest, minister, and so on are not life-long positions but jobs. Jesus, in addition to all the usual titles like Messiah, is also the “*shepherd and bishop of your souls*” (**1 Peter 2:25**); Jesus is also the high priest AND an apostle (**Hebrews 3:1**). And many other titles.

The point is, an apostle can sometimes do multiple jobs at once; Paul was “*ordained a preacher, and an apostle ... a teacher of the Gentiles*” (**1 Timothy 2:7**). He also performed the job of a deacon, by distributing funds to the needy in Jerusalem (**2 Corinthians 8-9**). Like any good leader, he leads because he can do any of the jobs anyone under him does – and usually do them better.

And when the need arises, he performs them even though he is “the apostle”, because ultimately “*he that is greatest among you shall be your servant*” (**Matthew 23:11**). So try not to think about it like Gentile churches do, as divinely granted titles, but more as roles that people play at different times.

BISHOPS

As mentioned above, Jesus was called “the shepherd *and* bishop of your souls”. The word translated bishop is the Greek *episkope* (think “Episcopal”), and literally means *inspection*, and by extension *overseer* – a person charged with the inspection of something.

A bishop is the overseer of a church; the man who does the job that James did in **Acts 15**, hearing all sides and then judging between them. The local “Father-figure” – not that he should be *called* father (**Matthew 23:9**), but that he performs the role of the ancient patriarch in the local church-family.

Timothy was an evangelist (**2 Timothy 4:5**), but he also did the *job* of a bishop (**verse 22**). And he was instructed by Paul to find people there who could be counted upon to lead the church to replace him (**2 Timothy 2:2**). Titus was also a bishop (**Titus 3:15**), and apparently also an evangelist since like Timothy he was “*Paul’s own son in the faith*” (**Titus 1:4**).

Paul gave him identical instructions about committing the truth Paul had shown him to others (**verse 5**). These “faithful men” were to be *elders* – **local patriarchs, head of the local church “house”**. That is why Paul went on to give basic qualifications for these elders, beginning with the office of a bishop (**verses 6-10**). Just as Timothy and Titus had taken some of the burden off of Paul and freed him for other tasks, it appears from this context that elders were to be trained to replace Timothy and Titus as bishops, freeing the evangelists for other tasks.

Paul had often spent years raising up and nurturing churches, filling the office of a bishop (**Acts 18:11, 19:8-10**). Timothy and Titus and others later helped him do that and helped the church to

spread. Did Paul also know that many of these bishops/elders/shepherds would betray the church? **Acts 20:17-38**. Did Moses know the same thing? **Deuteronomy 31:27-29**. A system of government is no better than the people who make it up. If the people want to have a teacher who teaches smooth things, will they find one? **2 Timothy 4:3-4**.

Then when a true preacher comes to them and reminds them of what they once believed, will they want to hear the truth? **Jeremiah 6:16-17**. Do the people in all these false churches LOVE to hear the uplifting messages of love and hope, messages utterly devoid of substance and truth? **Jeremiah 5:31**. Why do they love such messages? **John 3:19-21**. They hate the light **because they fear having to give up their sins! They fear correction – they fear OBEDIENCE TO GOD! Rather than fearing HIM, they fear what it might cost them to OBEY Him!**

PROPHETS

And that is why there are prophets. Although ranked second in authority in the church, between Paul and Timothy, between Apostles and Evangelists, prophets aren't a part of the regular chain of command; not technically. Their position in the church is, for lack of a better word, honorary.

Prophets are not charged with the care for a church region; they are not given regular duties at any place in the NT. So why are they there? **2 Peter 1:21**. Men, even good righteous men with the best of intentions, get caught up with their own goals, plans, and schemes – with THEIR WAYS of doing God's work. And sometimes they forget that it's not their work at all, but God's.

This is easy to do because when you work closely with any boss, *your* plans for achieving their goals become intertwined with their plans and the line between them blurs. So it's a forgivable mistake, but one which God can't just let slide. And so God needs a way to get a message through, past the regular chain of command. A way to get the attention of the men running things, and bring them back on track.

The best example of the office of a prophet was Nathan. David was running God's kingdom, and doing a pretty good job of it too – until the incident with Bathsheba and Uriah. It may be hard to believe, but what David had done did not seem wrong to him (**2 Samuel 11:25**). "Someone has to die on the front lines, why not Uriah?" – or so he reasoned.

But however he justified it, king David – who was, in a sense, the apostle of the time, because both positions represent the patriarch of a people – was unaware of the gravity of his sin. Enter Nathan in **2 Samuel 12:1-6**. This was not a particularly well-cloaked parable. The meaning jumps off the page at us – and yet David was completely unaware of the true meaning and declared the man worthy of death! That's when Nathan slapped him with the punchline "YOU are the man" (**verse 7**).

King David often ignored the advice of his next-in-commands, his captains of the armies; the position corresponding to Evangelist in the NT. For example, Joab had to resort to deception to make his point to the king about Absalom (**2 Samuel 14:1-22**). You know this subterfuge can't have been the first thing Joab tried to convince the king about this. David did sometimes listen, as in **2 Samuel 19:1-8**. But Joab's disrespectful tone got him fired (**verses 11-13**).

The point was, had Joab gone to David and said what he did to Uriah wasn't right, David probably wouldn't have listened. In fact, David's tone in **2 Samuel 11:25** implies that David knew that Joab would disapprove. But Joab didn't represent God – Nathan the prophet did. And David respected the prophet Nathan because David feared God.

So God let David do the daily leading of the nation, and let Abiathar and the other priests do the daily work of the temple, and used Nathan and other prophets **only when necessary**. The prophets were there to correct a king or a nation who wouldn't listen to normal instruction through regular channels.

As you read through the OT, you'll see that prophets were almost always sent to the king. And in the NT, prophets were almost always sent to an apostle; see **Acts 20:22-23, Acts 21:8-14**. Paul would not be dissuaded by his evangelists, his "Joabs", so God sent prophets to try to prevent him from going to Jerusalem. In this case, it didn't work but it does show the clear point of why the prophet is ranked second only to the apostle, and yet has no regular job in the church.

Are prophets and apostles appointed by God personally? **Luke 11:49**. These are the only two offices in the church which are appointed by God directly; thus they are independent of all other authority because they report directly to God. God gave them the authority, and only God can take it away.

MORE APOSTLES

Most people don't realize it, but *there were more than just those thirteen apostles!* For example, the Bible plainly says that JESUS was an apostle in **Hebrews 3:1**. Was Jesus qualified to be an apostle? **Luke 4:43**. And who sent Him, thus making Him an apostle? **John 5:30**. Was Paul an apostle of the Father, or an apostle of Jesus? Who sent him? **Ephesians 1:1**. Was Paul sent by men? **Galatians 1:1**.

Paul was an apostle (one sent) by Jesus Christ **at the Father's command!** Like Jesus, Paul was sent to do a specific job. The apostles were also given a specific job in **Matthew 28:18-19**. But though they were given the same *general* job, some were given different orders! (**John 21:15-22**). Jesus told Peter to "*feed my sheep*". Who were his sheep? **Matthew 15:24**.

So Jesus commissioned Peter to go to the Israelites. That's why we find Peter later among the Jews in Babylon in **1 Peter 5:13**. This command to "feed my sheep" was NOT a general command given to all the apostles! For when Peter demanded of Jesus "what shall JOHN do??" Jesus replied that it was none of his business; he had been given his job to do, and what John did was between John and Jesus.

I stress this because apostles were independent of one another. Each was sent by God through Jesus to do a different job. Each was responsible for the job he had been given. Paul had been sent to preach to the Gentiles, and when Peter and James interfered with that job, Paul went to Jerusalem in **Acts 15** and they agreed to stop troubling his churches.

But God had also apparently sent other apostles to do other jobs; because in **Revelation 2:2**, God praises people who "*have put to the test those who say that they themselves are Apostles but are not*" (**BBE**). Now if there were only the thirteen, how could it possibly be hard to tell who was an apostle and who wasn't? How did Paul expect the people to "test" his apostleship? **2 Corinthians 12:12**. Could Paul be an apostle to some people, but not to others? **1 Corinthians 9:1-2**.

The point of all this is that anyone who is sent by God to do a job, anyone who was not sent by proxy through another man, is an apostle. Generally that person will have signs following (**Mark 16:17**), but there may be exceptions too (**John 10:41, Luke 7:28**). Where did John get his authority? **Matthew 21:23-27**. The implication is clearly that John was given his commission to baptize from heaven – from God. Just as Jesus was. But this opens up a subject that's worth exploring...

THE FLAW IN JESUS' AUTHORITY

Everyone knows that Jesus went to the Jews and the Jews rejected Him. But no one really knows WHY they rejected Him. See, the Jews were not stupid. They knew that Jesus had power from God (**John 3:1-2**). Cornelius was a powerful, influential man. He had talked to the other priests, and they KNEW that Jesus was from God.

And the Jews were not only open to the idea of a Messiah, they were DESPERATE for one. They had been humbled under Gentile rule for 600 years, and were eagerly awaiting the Messiah (**Matthew 11:2-3**). And they knew that Jesus was coming (**John 1:44-45**) and based on the prophecies of Daniel's 70 weeks (**Daniel 9:25-27**), it is *very* likely they knew precisely WHEN. So they were keyed up and ready for the Messiah to come. They WANTED the "king of the Jews" to come, as promised, and restore the kingdom to Israel (**Acts 1:6**)!

...so what was wrong? Why did they reject Him and kill Him? **Because they wanted Him to come on their terms and to vindicate their traditions when He did so!** They wanted Jesus to come from one of their prominent, respected families in Jerusalem (**John 7:52**); graduate with top honors from their highest learning institutions (**John 7:15**); be anointed by their high priest (**Hebrews 7:14**); THEN they would have gladly followed Him to the ends of the Earth!

How did they feel about Jesus' origins? **John 7:40-53, Matthew 13:54-58**. Were they shocked by His attitude of confidence? **Mark 1:22**. Did they know He was a teacher from God? **John 3:1-2**. So why didn't they believe Him? **John 12:42-43**.

They DID believe Him! They KNEW He was speaking the truth, and many knew – or at least, had reason to suspect – that He was the Messiah! Even among the highest ranking Jews! **But because Jesus was not part of THEIR sect – even though they KNEW He spoke the truth – they rejected Him! Because He did not carry THEIR authority! And God's authority wasn't enough for them!**

It bothered them greatly that Jesus didn't have any group of men who said to Him "you have *our* authority to teach". He only had truth on His side – and that is only enough *for people who love truth*. It is NOT enough for the world. The world needs MORE than a Messiah, MORE than an apostle, MORE than a teacher of God. They need a man whom OTHER MEN say is wise, righteous, and qualified to teach!

They need you to be ordained by one of THEIR ministers; taught in one of THEIR seminaries; approved by THEIR rules and righteous by THEIR definitions! But no man can be beloved by God AND be beloved by the world! (**Galatians 1:10, James 4:4**). The flaw in Jesus' authority is that He was an uneducated, unrespected, irreverent and irreligious young hick from the backwaters of Judea **and yet he dared to thumb his nose at hundreds of years of their traditions!**

TODAY

God's authority wasn't good enough. They only recognized the authority of men, and it's no different today. If you do not have a certificate of ordination – showing, not that God ordained you, but that a certain organization or a certain man ordained you – most people won't listen to you. They certainly wouldn't call you a preacher or a minister without it.

So are people really so different today? If you haven't gone to the seminary, been ordained by some false Christian somewhere, and don't respect the traditions of SOME church – they don't really care WHICH church, but SOME church – then you aren't qualified to speak in God's name.

They'd rather you told them lies in the name of the Church of the Intergalactic Order of Illustrious Universal Love than tell them truth in the name of God. They feel you MUST be ordained by SOME man, SOME organization, somewhere – no matter how ridiculous it might be, any ordination is better than none. But who ordained Jesus? Who ordained Paul? Who ordained John?

Read **John 15:12-15**. Does this apply only to the apostles, or to everyone who obeys Jesus? Were only the apostles supposed to "love one another" as Jesus loved them? Now read **verse 17**; does that apply ONLY to the apostles, or was that command to everyone who believed on Jesus? Was this speech for their benefit only, or was it ALSO spoken for US? **John 17:20-21**.

This speech was for US, ALL of us who believe Jesus' words! So now back up to that verse we skipped, **John 15:16**. Does that not apply to us as well? Any of us who believe Jesus' words? God calls many. But FEW are chosen (**Matthew 22:14**). **But those who ARE chosen are ORDAINED to bring forth fruit!**

It is our JOB, no matter who we are or what office we hold, to USE those talents He committed to us (**Matthew 25:14-30**). We are ORDAINED to bring forth fruit and be PROFITABLE servants – to take what God gave us and make it GROW! Whether He has given us only a tiny bit of understanding and authority, or whether He makes us emperor of Earth!

We need no additional authority from man to do that **for we have already BEEN ordained to use what God has given us to improve our lives and the lives of everyone we know!**

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

When you were a little child and you wanted a dog, your parents probably bought you a fish instead. Instead of a pony, you got an ant farm (which you later made into the necklace in Lesson 33). Your parents did this to teach you responsibility on a very little thing before giving you the responsibility to feed, walk, and clean up after a dog.

If you did well with the goldfish, perhaps you were given a hamster; then finally a dog. On the other hand, if the goldfish got irradiated by the desk lamp or eaten by the cat, you probably didn't get more responsibility right away **because you didn't take care of what you already had.**

Luke 16:10 *He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.*

We are all given some measure of authority. The lowliest child of a servant has, if nothing else, a stuffed animal that is lower than he is. How we manage our authority is far, far more important than how much authority we have. A man who manages his own temper well is a greater man than a Hercules who takes a city (**Proverbs 16:32**).

Like it or not, we are all responsible for something; a few coins and a few scraps of clothes in our shopping cart under a bridge; a small locker in a prison cell; a flock of chickens in our yard; we are all placed in authority over something. And most of us are also responsible for someone.

And it is how well we manage this authority that determines whether God will give us more. I know many poor people, and I can say without exception that not one is poor because of how much money they *make*. They are all poor because of how much money they *spend*. It isn't because they were not *given* enough money, **it is how they manage what they have already that keeps them poor!**

You must manage wisely what you already have to be given more, or else you would waste it like you have wasted what you already have. Before you get a herd of ponies, you must take care of one; before you get a pony, you must take care of a hamster. Before you do that, you must take care of your room. Yet most people walk around begging God for a herd of ponies when they carelessly killed the last three fish He gave them.

And we all desire more; more money, more respect, more authority. And there is nothing wrong with that (**1 Corinthians 12:31**), but that ambition becomes wrong if you desire it *without earning it*. Adam and Eve coveted "the best gifts" before qualifying to receive them, and stole to get them. Desiring to be a minister is a good thing (**1 Timothy 3:1**). But it's a BAD thing if you desire it *for its own sake*.

You might wish one day to rule an empire, and there is nothing wrong with that *if you desire to do it righteously*. The wisdom and character required to properly rule an empire is a noble goal!

Wanting to become a person who could be trusted in such a position is a great thing! **Desiring to crawl there on the backs of the innocent so that you can abuse your position for your own selfish lusts is not.**

So what we should desire is not more authority, but better authority. Not to have more influence, **but to use our influence more wisely.** If a man cannot rule his own house and produce happiness there, he cannot rule the church of God (**1 Timothy 3:5**). For if his physical children are unruly monsters, you may be sure that his spiritual children will be the same. If his physical wife is an obnoxious tramp, you may be sure that he will train the bride of Christ to behave the same.

If you cannot manage a small salary well, you will not be able to manage a million-dollar corporation any better. If you cannot manage your own family, you cannot manage God's. If you cannot manage your livestock, you will not be able to manage your own family. Learn to manage what you have selflessly, wisely, and righteously; then you will be fit to be given more.

So ask yourself what powers are at your disposal. And how well are YOU learning to control and properly direct them? Don't ask God for more money, more power, more opportunities; first demonstrate that you have the wisdom to manage what He has already given you.

This work is completely non-denominational and is meant to fulfill Christ's great commission to "*preach the gospel to every creature*" (**Mark 16:15**). **This publication is not to be sold**; "*freely ye have received, freely give*" (**Matthew 10:8**).

The Bible tells us to PROVE ALL THINGS, and The Simple Answers encourages people to do just that. If you cannot PROVE what you believe, you have no right to believe it! Many of the things we print are shocking because they are different from what you've heard, but if something we say offends or upsets you, we hope you will take the time to set aside your preconceived ideas and PROVE your point from the Bible to see if you truly have been right all these years.

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Nathaniel Burson
10758 Hwy 155 South
Big Sandy, TX 75755

Questions@TheSimpleAnswers.com

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