

**VITAL FACTORS FOR THE RECOVERY OF THE CHURCH LIFE, Week 4****The Factor of Authority in the Body of Christ and in the Local Churches**

Scripture Reading: Rom. 9:23; Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:22-23; Heb. 4:16; Rev. 4:2; 22:1-2

Romans 9:23	In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory,
Matthew 28:18	And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, <a href="#">All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.</a>
Ephesians 1:22	And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be <a href="#">Head over all things to the church,</a>
Ephesians 1:23	Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.
Hebrews 4:16	Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the <a href="#">throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help.</a>
Revelation 4:2	Immediately I was in spirit; and behold, <a href="#">there was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne there was One sitting;</a>
Revelation 22:1	And he showed me a <a href="#">river of water of life,</a> bright as crystal, <a href="#">proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.</a>
Revelation 22:2	And on this side and on that side of the river was the <a href="#">tree of life,</a> producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

If a man is rebellious, his words surely will reveal rebellion. Sooner or later rebellious words will come out of his mouth, because out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. In order to know authority, a [man must first meet authority.](#) If a man has not met authority, he will never be able to submit. It is useless to merely listen to messages on submission. A [man must at one time meet God,](#) and then the basis of [God's authority will be established in him.](#) When he speaks, he will know if a word of disobedience comes out. Even before the word comes out, the thought of it will give him an uneasy feeling. He will realize that he has stepped beyond his boundary and that there is a restraining within him. If a man speaks words of rebellion carelessly without any restraining within, he must be one who has never met authority. It is much easier for a man to speak in rebellion than to act in rebellion.

...Mostly people pay lip service and submit outwardly. But in the church there should not be just outward submission; [all submission should come from the heart.](#) If you want to know whether or not a man is submissive in heart, see if he is submissive in words. [God requires a submission of the heart from us.](#) We have to meet God's authority or the problem will explode sooner or later. (*Authority and Submission, chapter 9*)

**Day 1**

<b>Matthew 28:18</b>	And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
<b>Ephesians 1:22</b>	And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,

**I. God is the [supreme authority](#); He has all authority—Rom. 9:21-22:**

- A. God's authority is actually [God Himself](#); authority issues out from [God's own being](#)—Rev. 22:1.
- B. [All authority](#)—spiritual, positional, and governmental—[derives from God](#)—2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10; John 19:10-11; Gen. 9:6.
- C. Knowing authority is an [inward revelation](#) rather than an outward teaching— Acts 22:6-16.
- D. The [Lord Jesus](#) was a man under authority; He [humbled Himself, did the Father's will,](#) and was [obedient unto death,](#) even the death of the cross—Matt. 8:9; John 4:34; 6:38; Phil. 2:7-8.
- E. In His divinity, as the only begotten **Son of God**, the [Lord had authority over all,](#) but in **His humanity**, as the Son of Man and the King of the heavenly kingdom, all authority in heaven and on earth was given to Him [after His resurrection](#)— Matt. 28:18.
- F. Now as the Ruler of the kings of the earth, the God-exalted Jesus is the Ruler over all the ones who are in power; He is the [chief Ruler](#) in the divine government for the fulfillment of God's eternal plan—Acts 2:23, 36; 5:31; Rev. 1:5.
- G. In Christ's ascension God made Him the [unique Head](#) of the Body, the church, and inaugurated Him into the [headship](#) of the universe; the Head of the whole universe is Jesus—Col. 1:18; Acts 2:36; Eph. 1:22-23.

A deputy authority must remember that all authorities come from God. God is the One who has established all authorities. If there is any authority in a man at all, that authority comes from God. There is no inherent authority in a person, and no one can appoint himself to be an authority. Our personal opinions cannot become others' law, and our own ideas, views, and proposals do not deserve others' esteem; they are no better than those who are under us. We have to remember that all authority comes from God. In fact, the only authority that is authority at all is the authority that comes from God, and only such authority can claim submission from others. We can only ask the brothers and sisters to submit to the authority in us which comes from God. A deputy authority can only be a deputy to God's authority. He cannot presume that he has any authority in himself just because he has become a deputy authority. This is a basic problem with us today. All deputy authorities must remember that they are merely God's representative authorities; they have no authority in themselves. (*Authority and Submission, chapter 9*)

### Day 2

**Colossians 1:18** And He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

**Ephesians 4:15** But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,

### II. Christ is both the Head corporately of the Body, the church, and individually of all the believers; He is the Head directly of every one of us, and we all are under His authority—Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 11:3:

- A. For Christ to be the **Head** is for Him to have **all the authority in the Body**—Rom. 9:21, 23; Matt. 28:18:
  - 1. The Body cannot move freely; it can move only at the **direction of the Head**.
  - 2. The authority to direct the Body and all its members rests with the Head.
- B. Whether we are under the authority of the Head determines whether we know the **life of the Body**—1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 4:15-16; Col. 1:18; 3:4:
  - 1. The Body can **have only one Head** and can **submit only to one Head**—1:18.
  - 2. Only Christ is the unique Head, and **we must submit to Him**, honoring and testifying to the unique headship of the God-exalted Christ—Eph. 1:22-23; Matt. 23:8-12.
- C. In order to live in the Body, we need to **recognize the authority in the Body**—Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18; 2:19:
  - 1. Concerning the authority in the Body, first and foremost is the need for the **authority** of the Head **flowing throughout the whole Body**—Eph. 5:23-24:
    - a. When we submit directly to the Head, **we also care for the Body**; it is impossible for us to say that we are submitting to the authority of the Head without caring for the Body.
    - b. Only the Lord is our Head, and only He has the authority to direct the moves of the members of His Body.
  - 2. In the Body the **elders** and the **apostles** are **deputy authorities**, carrying out the authority of the Head—Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 5:17a; 1 Cor. 12:28:
    - a. On the one hand, all the members of the Body **submit directly to the Head**—Eph. 5:24a.
    - b. On the other hand, the members **submit to the deputies of the Head**—Heb. 13:17.

### Day 3

**1 Corinthians 11:3** But I want you to know that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ.

**1 Corinthians 14:40** But all things must be done becomingly and in order.

### III. The **order** of the church comes out of the **authority in the church**—the honoring of the **unique headship of Christ**—Col. 1:18; Phil. 1:1:

- A. In the church there is no human organization, but there is a **spiritual order**—v. 1; 1 Cor. 14:40; 11:34b.
- B. The Head of the church is Christ the Lord, and the **authority** in the church is the **headship of Christ**—Matt. 28:18; Col. 1:18.

- C. In the church there must be **order**, but this order comes from the **headship of Christ**—Eph. 1:22-23.
- D. We can have the real practice of the church life only by **submitting to the unique headship of Christ**—Col. 1:18; 2:19:
1. The order in the church comes from the headship of Christ being **realized by us in a practical way**—1 Cor. 11:3, 16; Eph. 1:22.
  2. If we do not have the spiritual order in the church that comes from realizing the headship of Christ in a practical way, there is no possibility for us to practice the real church life—1 Cor. 11:3; 14:40.

#### Day 4

**1 Corinthians 12:28** And God has placed some in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then works of power, then gifts of healing, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.

**Acts 20:28** Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.

#### IV. In the church God's authority is **expressed** and **represented** by the **apostles** and **elders**—12:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-3:

- A. God has appointed **elders** and **apostles** to be the authority in the church—1 Cor. 12:28; Acts 14:23.
- B. Apostles and elders have no authority in themselves; **they have authority only as they stand under the authority of the Head**; they exercise authority in the church by representing the authority of the Head.
- C. In order to manifest His authority in the church, God appoints **elders in every local church** to represent His authority—v. 23; Titus 1:5:
1. In the universal church there is the **office of apostleship**, which gives the apostles the position and the right to appoint elders for the administration of the local churches—1 Cor. 12:28; Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5.
  2. The Holy Spirit was one with the apostles in their appointment of the elders, and the apostles did this **according to the leading of the Holy Spirit**—Acts 20:28.
  3. The authority of the elders is for **representing and expressing God's authority**—1 Pet. 5:1-3s.
  4. The main responsibility of the elders as overseers is not to rule but to **shepherd**, to take **all-inclusive tender care of the flock**, the church of God—Acts 20:28.
  5. The scriptural principle with regard to eldership is **plurality**; with the plurality of the eldership, there is **no definite leader**, and the **unique headship of Christ is regarded, preserved, and respected**—14:23; Titus 1:5.
  6. In the church life we need to **obey** the ones leading us and **submit** to them (Heb. 13:17); if we cannot submit to God's appointed deputy authority, we cannot submit to God.

The organization of the church must be of **life**. Although there are arrangements and coordination, these must issue from the **inward growth in life** because the church is the Body of Christ, an organism. The organization of the church must also be **under the authority of God**. The arrangements and coordination must be the result of God's authority, of the authority of the Holy Spirit, not the issue of man's authority.

The organization of the church is a matter of life and of authority. Who is ruling? Is it man, or is it the Holy Spirit? Is it us, or is it God? This is a solemn matter. If man rules, this is according to the principle of the Roman Catholic Church. The **Holy Spirit must rule, and the authority must be in the hands of the Holy Spirit**. Only then can we be the church. Hence, we who work for the Lord and serve in various places must check with ourselves concerning where the authority for our coordination lies. Not only should the leading brothers ask themselves concerning who has the authority, but also those who are learning to serve should ask themselves whether in obeying the leading brothers they are obeying man or obeying God. **If they are merely obeying man and man's authority, their obedience is wrong.** (*Three Aspects of the Church, Book 3: The Organization of the Church, chapter 2*)

#### Day 5

**Revelation 4:2** Immediately I was in spirit; and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne there was One sitting;

**Hebrews 4:16** Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help.

**V. There is a [divine government](#) in the church life today, and this government comes from the [throne of God and of the Lamb](#)—Rev. 22:1-2:**

- A. The divine authority in the church is for God to [dispense Himself into us as life](#), as the [life supply](#), and as the [all-sufficient grace](#); only by submitting to the throne can we share in His all-sufficient source of the flowing grace—2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 22:1-2, 16a.
- B. The [throne of grace](#) in Hebrews 4:16 is the [throne of authority](#) in Revelation 4, which becomes in Revelation 22:1-2 the [throne of God and of the Lamb](#), out from which flows “a river of water of life, bright as crystal” (v. 1):
  1. Although the throne is the throne of authority, the throne of headship, out of the throne [flows the river of water of life](#)—v. 1.
  2. The fact that the throne is not only the throne of God but the throne of God and of the Lamb means that God in the Lamb is flowing out as grace for our enjoyment:
    - a. We should never separate authority from grace or grace from authority; [grace and authority are one](#)—Heb. 4:16; Rev. 22:1.
    - b. Whenever we come to this throne, we have the sense that the [grace of God is like a river flowing into us](#)—Heb. 4:16; Rev. 22:1-2.
3. Today the Lord Jesus does not reign merely with authority; He is reigning [in the church, among the churches](#), and [over all the churches](#) through the [flowing of His life as grace](#)—4:2-3; 5:6; 7:9; 22:1-2.

### Day 6

**Revelation 22:1-2** And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street. And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

- C. The throne, the authority, of God and of the Lamb is not only the source of the divine administration; it is also the [source of the divine fellowship](#)—vv. 1-2:
  1. **Authority** and **fellowship** are two lines in the Body—1 Cor. 11:3; 12:12-13, 18; 1:9; 10:16-17.
  2. Whereas the **throne** is a matter of [authority](#), the **flowing river** is a matter of [fellowship](#), signified by the street, which is of “pure gold, like transparent glass”—Rev. 21:21:
    - a. The **throne** represents the [divine authority](#), and from the throne flows the river of water of life for us to enjoy the divine fellowship—22:1-2.
    - b. In this fellowship there is the divine authority, for in God’s economy [authority always goes together with fellowship](#)—2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10, 14.
3. In order to **build up a local church** in a practical way, we need both the [throne of God and of the Lamb](#) and the [water of life](#), bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne and flowing on the street—Rev. 22:1-2.

The theocratic government in the churches in the New Testament is through the [Spirit who dwells in the spirits of the apostles and the elders](#), both of whom are the New Testament priests, with the revelation of the New Testament teaching. The Urim and Thummim on the breastplate of the high priest in the Old Testament typify the unveiling Spirit, the Holy Spirit, indwelling our receiving spirit, our regenerated spirit. These two spirits mingled together are today's Urim and Thummim. [Whenever the apostles and the elders as the New Testament priests come to the Lord and wait on Him for His administration in the church, they will surely receive some light and some word from the Lord.](#) By this way we have God's speaking in the administration of the church to carry out His theocratic government.

God's theocratic government in the churches in the New Testament is according to the life-giving [Spirit as the consummation of the Triune God indwelling the leading ones](#). When the leading ones go to the Lord to seek His leading, they receive some inner understanding. When the prophets prophesy, what they say strengthens the feeling of the leading ones. The result of this divine coordination of the New Testament priests and prophets in the Body of Christ is the God-commanded blessing. I hope that all of us can now have a clear view concerning the New Testament leadership, including the headship of Christ, the leadership in the church life, the leadership in the ministry, and God's government in the administration of the churches. (*Leadership in the New Testament, 4*)

