

RESTORATION OF THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST

Chapter 1

SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

Eternal God the Father, as the head of all authority, has delegated His authority to His Son Jesus Christ., who is now **"head over all things to the Church."** [Ephesians 1:22].

When Christ returned to His Father, He sent the Holy Spirit to be His representative in the church. Now Christ's authority as head of the church is transmitted through the Holy Spirit to the ministerial heads of the church, and so on to the members.

The supreme authority of God the Father is upheld when there is obedience through this chain of authority, i.e. when God's will is directed through Christ by the Holy Spirit to church leaders, and then obeyed. Our direct link with Christ is the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, **"when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He...will take of what is Mine and declare it to you."** [John 16:13,14.]

Spiritual lawlessness occurs when the Holy Spirit is ignored, and works are performed in the power of the carnal flesh, i.e. our natural abilities controlled by self rather than the Holy Spirit.

The Significance of the Fall of Man

From the viewpoint of power, and the fulfilment of His eternal purposes, God is head of all authority. He is invincible. King Jehoshaphat addressed God in a manner that clearly acknowledged this fact.

"O LORD God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven, and do you not rule over all kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand you"? [2 Chronicles 20:6].

Despite the fact that God is invincible, and no one can withstand His purposes, His authority is not upheld by force. He made man with a free will, and as a consequence, His authority must be upheld by man's willing obedience. The significance of the Fall is that God's authority and headship over man fell into the hands of Satan. This was a direct result of man's disobedience.

God gave man a clear command in the Garden of Eden. **"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'From every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat of the fruit of it you shall surely die.'"** [Genesis 2:16-17].

Then Satan, in the guise of a serpent, enticed Eve to disobey God. **"And the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes shall be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'"** [Genesis 3:4-5]. Eve had a clear choice. She could obey God, or she could obey Satan. She chose to eat the forbidden fruit, and Adam consented to join her in disobedience.

At that point Adam was the representative of all mankind, just as at a later point in time, Jesus was the representative of all mankind in bearing their punishment. Because true practical authority exists only when it is met with obedience, when man decided to disobey God and obey Satan, God's authority over man was transferred to Satan. That is why Jesus referred to Satan as **"the ruler of this world."** [John 12:31, 14:30, & 16:11].

It is written of God that **"Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne."** [Psalm 97:2]. Despite His vastly superior position to Satan, a mere created being, God still recognized Satan's claim over mankind. The apostle Paul wrote, **"Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves to obey, you are the slaves of the one you obey, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness"?** [Romans 6:16].

That is still the case with unredeemed man. Paul reminded the Christians at Ephesus of this by recalling their former state. **"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the**

prince of the power of the air (Satan), **the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among who also we all once conducted ourselves in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.**" [Ephesians 2:1-3].

Because of His foreknowledge, God knew that His sovereignty over man would be usurped by Satan, and even before the foundation of the world he purposed to restore His authority through His own Son, Jesus Christ. The whole history of God's dealings with mankind relate to the restoration of His authority.

The Obedience of the Son

Since obedience is at the centre of true authority, God's authority over man could only be restored if man's obedience to God was established on earth. This task God entrusted to Jesus Christ His Son. God's first requirement was that Jesus take upon Himself the mantle of human flesh, and as man, display perfect obedience to God throughout His ministry on earth. Ultimately, the obedience required of Christ was directed to His willingness to suffer an agonizing death on the cross for the redemption of mankind.

We read of Christ that, **"by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth...All things were created through Him and for Him."** [Colossians 1:16]. As the Creator of mankind, Christ was required to bear responsibility for that which He had created--to bear the punishment that was due to mankind because of their sins.

When Jesus, in spirit, stood before the judgment seat of God, He represented the whole of mankind. He was corporate man, accepting upon Himself God's judgment of the sins of man. He received their sentence, and bore the full weight of their judgment until the very last demand of justice had been fulfilled. The mocking abuse, the beatings and scourging, the agonizing death on the cross, and the tortures of hell were more than enough to atone for the sins of every man. Satan, the accuser of the brethren, was put to silence.

The cost of Christ's obedience is beyond our mortal comprehension. God the Son relinquished His position of equality with God the Father. He let go **"the glory which (He) had with (God) before the world was."** [John 17:5]. He **"made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in the appearance of man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."**[Philippians 2:7-8].

We read of His acute anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane, when knowing the enormity of the suffering that faced Him, He prayed, **"O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me."** But then, because of His dedication to obedience to the Father, He concluded, **"if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done."** [Matthew 26:39, 42].

We also see the torture of His separation from God, who could not associate with the label of the sin of man that Christ chose to bear, and therefore withdrew from Him. Christ cried out in agony of spirit, **"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me"?** [Matthew 27:46].

During His ministry on earth, Jesus perfectly obeyed the will of the Father. His obedience is reflected in His prayer to God, just prior to His crucifixion. **"I have glorified You on earth. I have finished the work You have given Me to do...I have manifested Your name to the men You have given Me out of the world...I have given them the words which You have given Me...While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled...As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world...And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them."** [John 17:4, 6,8,18, &26].

Finally, as He hung on the cross, **"knowing that all things were now accomplished... he said, 'It is finished!'"** [John 19:28,30]. It was a complete work, done in perfect obedience.

By His perfect work of obedience, Christ has laid the foundation for establishing God's authority on earth. The commission of completing this work has been entrusted to the church.

Chapter 2

JESUS CHRIST IS LORD

Because Jesus humbled himself, and was obedient to God to the point of dying on the cross, God responded by exalting Him to a position above every other authority and power, declaring Him to be LORD, and His name to be the name above every other name.

"Therefore God also has exalted Him and given him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." [Philippians 2:9-10].

Jesus committed the awesome authority and power of His name into the hands of His disciples, and so to the whole church. His last words to His disciples were: **"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."** [Matthew 28:18-20].

It was obvious to Jesus' disciples that this transference of authority included the use of His name, with all the authority and power associated with it. When Peter healed a lame man, members of the Sanhedrin asked him, **"By what power or by what name have you done this"?** Peter responded, **"let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands before you whole."** [Acts 4:7 & 10].

Even the members of the Sanhedrin recognized the authority and power associated with the name of Jesus, and therefore tried to curtail its use. They responded in this manner: **"But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name."** And so they **"called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus."** [Acts 4:17-18].

We have a further example of Jesus delegating His authority to His disciples in Luke 10:19. **"Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you."**

The Lawless Use of the Name of Jesus

Even though the authority and power of the name of Jesus has been entrusted to the church, its use must be initiated by the Holy Spirit, and not by the flesh. Jesus made it abundantly clear that those who used His name indiscriminately were lawless, and must therefore face judgment. **"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name'? And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"** [Matthew 7:22-23].

How Jesus Used His Authority

In His ministry on earth, Jesus was given authority to use God's name, and manifest its accompanying power. He prayed to God, **"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given to Me out of the world."** [John 17:6]. But it was never used through His own initiation. He made this very clear in such statements as these:

"Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for what He does, the Son also does in like manner." [John 5:19].

"The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does the works." [John 14:10].

How did Jesus 'see' what the Father was doing, and 'hear' the words that the Father spoke? Jesus said it was by the Father who dwelt in Him. That is, it was by the Spirit of the Father, or the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit showed Him what the Father was doing amongst the people, and it was the Holy Spirit who put His Father's words in His mouth. Jesus did all things through the initiation of the Spirit.

When Jesus left this earth, He promised that He would send the Holy Spirit to the church to be His representative. He told His disciples, **"when He the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you."** [John 16:13-14].

It follows that, just as Jesus did and spoke only those things given to Him by the Father, and likewise the Holy Spirit only does and speaks the things of Christ, we in turn should allow ourselves to be directed and controlled by the Holy Spirit. To **"walk in the Spirit"** [Gal 5.16], is to be under the control of the Spirit. As the Holy Spirit is the representative of Jesus, to be obedient to the Spirit is to be obedient to Lord Jesus Christ, and as a consequence, obedient to God the Father. By comparison, to walk after the flesh is to act independently from the Spirit. From a spiritual point of view, this is rebellion and lawlessness.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH

From the beginning to the end, the church can have only one head, and that is Christ. **"And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all."** [Ephesians 1:22]. Jesus Christ is the supreme head of all things associated with the church. Christ's authority as head of the church is made effective by the power of the Holy Spirit, who was sent to the church for this purpose. In everything He expresses the will of Christ, and supplies the power to establish His kingdom on earth.

The true church is a body through which the Lord may express His desires through the Holy Spirit without hindrance. But in many cases Christ's chosen way to express Himself through the Holy Spirit has been substituted by works initiated by man. **BUT ONLY THAT WHICH IS ABLE TO EXPRESS THE MIND OF CHRIST THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN BE LEGITIMATELY CALLED OF THE CHURCH.**

When writing to Christians in Corinth, Paul said, **"we have the mind of Christ,"** [1 Cor 2:16], but again to the Christians in Rome, he also talks about being carnally minded or spiritually minded. **"For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."** [Romans 8:6]. It is important that we understand the difference, because being spiritually minded allows us to be led by the Spirit in the will of Christ, whilst carnal mindedness leads to disobedient lawless works of the flesh, resulting in spiritual death.

The mind of a carnal person is self-motivated, acting out of self-interest, or promptings from their emotions. The spiritually minded person continually turns to the Lord in prayer, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead them to a position of settled peace before they act. In short, the 'mind of Christ' is one which is capable of being led by the Spirit.

When brothers and sisters speak in the flesh, or initiate works in the flesh, they remove the authority of the Holy Spirit, and consequently the church loses its true spiritual grounds.

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit to the Church

We can see now why it is so important for the church to have leaders who have been prepared, anointed, and commissioned by the Lord. This applies particularly to elders, who have the responsibility for the oversight of the church.

Leaders who are prepared by the Lord have had to endure a refining process to deal with the power of the flesh. Because they have no confidence in the flesh, prepared leaders continually turn to the Lord, and consequently learn to discern the voice of the Spirit, and the authority of Lord is transmitted through the Holy Spirit to their ministries. This process was very apparent in the working of the early church, where the Lord was able to guide and empower the apostles through the Holy Spirit.

The Lord Jesus Christ ministered to the church through the Holy Spirit in their midst. Even though it appears that the Holy Spirit had command of the church (as in the readings below), it should be understood that He did not speak on His own authority. He only did and spoke those things given to Him by the Lord. The Lord **"is head of all things to the church."**

He Appointed Leaders

"As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" [Acts 13:2].

"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers." [Acts 20:28].

He Anointed Chosen Leaders

"Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of hands of the presbytery (elders)." [1 Timothy 4:14].

He Commanded

"And they passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and when they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them." [Acts 16:6-7].

He Told of Things to Come

"Then one of them, Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar." [Acts 11:28].

He Gave an Anointing to Discern Truth

"But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things." [I John 2:20].

He Distributed Spiritual Gifts to the Body

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all...But one and the same Spirit works in all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills." [1 Corinthians 12:7 & 11].

He Interceded

"Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." [Romans 8:26-27].

He Baptised in the Spirit

"Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat on each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." [Acts 2:3-4].

It is clear from these accounts, that the vitality of the early church was due to the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in her midst, which was administered in response to willing acceptance and obedience to His ministry. It is also true that the modern church has to a large degree ignored the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and replaced His authority as the Lord's representative with the leadership of man. The church has become carnal and worldly, and as a result of the diminished presence of the Holy Spirit in her midst, has become cold and powerless.

Chapter 4

RESTORATION OF THE CHURCH

Many Christians are looking forward to the restoration of the church to her former glory and power. However, most people envisage this restoration occurring through a world-wide spiritual revival.

It is important to see that there is a clear distinction between revival and restoration. There have been many revivals during the church's history, each bringing a refreshing of Holy Spirit power. But none has restored the church to her original glory for more than a comparatively brief period. Even though revival is a necessary part of restoration, it is not the crux of restoration. Restoration, as the name suggests, is to restore to the original pattern. If the church is to be restored, it must return to the pattern of the early church.

The key to restoring the church is the resetting of its foundation to the original pattern. The foundation on which the early church operated was THE AUTHORITY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AS HEAD OF THE CHURCH. To restore this foundation, we must restore the authority of the Holy Spirit as the Lord's representative, and to restore the pattern of leadership in the church to that initiated by Jesus Himself.

Church Leaders Designated by the Lord

The Lord Jesus Christ has committed Himself to prepare and anoint leaders, and to present them to the church as a gift. **"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift...And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying (or building up) of the body of Christ."** [Ephesians 4:4, & 11-12].

Four leadership positions are mentioned: APOSTLES, PROPHETS, EVANGELISTS, and PASTORS AND TEACHERS.

The last two are combined, together forming the office of elder. The word 'pastor' is translated as 'shepherd' in every other instance in the New Testament, and so the last leadership position should be seen as that of SHEPHERD/TEACHER. This is an important distinction, because the dual role of shepherd/teacher is linked with the office of the ELDER. E.g.

"The elders who are among you I exhort...Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers..." [1 Pet 5:1-2].

"From Miletus (Paul) sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church." He instructed them to "take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." [Acts 20:17, 28].

Paul listed the ability to teach with the necessary qualifications of an elder. **"A bishop (elder) then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behaviour, hospitable, able to teach"** [1 Tim 3:2].

It is regrettable that the ministerial leadership positions listed above have all but disappeared from the operation of today's church. They have been replaced by professional clergymen prepared and qualified after the manner of the world. As often as not the modern 'minister' is employed to single handedly manage all of the affairs of the local church.

But let us turn our attention to the original pattern. Below is a brief outline of the functions of the ministerial leadership positions designated by the Lord.

APOSTLES

The meaning of the Greek word for apostle is 'the sent one.' Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, apostles were 'called,' and sent out to form and establish new churches.

"The Holy Spirit said, 'now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" Acting in obedience, the rest of the prophets and teachers, "having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away." [Acts 13:2-3].

Paul and Barnabas then embarked on missionary journeys to the surrounding regions , preaching the gospel and establishing new churches.

ELDERS

Elders are entrusted with the oversight of the local church. The history of the early church shows us that when the apostles had formed and established churches, they relinquished their oversight into the hands of a team of elders. We have an example in Paul's final address to the Ephesian elders. **"And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more... Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."** [Acts 20:25,28].

The two main aspects of the elder's commission are highlighted in Peter's instruction to elders. **"The elders who are among you I exhort...Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers..."** [1 Peter 5:1-2].

The main responsibility of the elder is that of oversight, keeping all things in order according to the pattern and truths inherited from the early church. They are to guard the flock against Satan's attacks, and the intrusion of deception and error. Paul warned the Ephesian elders, that **"after (his) departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock."** [Acts 20:28-29]. In their capacity as overseers, the elders are a covering over the flock.

The second aspect of the ministry of the elder is **"to shepherd the church of God."** Basically, shepherding is the ministry of pastoral care in two areas.

1. Tending the flock: This involves providing ministries of healing, counselling, deliverance, support for the needy, etc.
2. Feeding the Flock or Teaching: The elders must provide teaching for all levels of the church. They themselves should teach, and refute error. They should ensure that individuals are equipped through necessary gifts of the Spirit, and then provided with opportunities to develop ministries to the body.

Finally, it is important to see that local churches were governed by a team of elders. Nowhere in the New Testament do we find an example of a single elder having oversight of a church. This emphasizes the error of modern congregations being governed by a single minister.

PROPHETS

The ministry of the prophet is different to the gift of prophecy listed among the nine gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12. A person with the gift of prophecy speaks words from God given directly to him by the Holy Spirit, so that others are encouraged, exhorted, or warned. On the other hand, the ministry of the prophet is the operation of prophetic teaching, in which the Scriptures are unfolded to reveal our present position before God, and what lies before us in the future.

EVANGELISTS

Evangelists present the gospel message of salvation under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, so that by the convicting power of the Spirit, hearts are turned to repentance and salvation. In the early church it was not unusual for evangelists to accompany apostles on their missionary journeys.

THE OPERATION OF A CHAIN OF AUTHORITY

A chain of authority is a sequence of authoritative positions in descending order. We have an example of a chain of authority and its operation in the account of the centurion's request to the Lord to heal his servant.

"The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" [Matthew 8:8-10].

When the centurion said, **"for I also am a man under authority,"** he was identifying with Jesus, acknowledging that both of them were part of a chain of authority. The centurion was under authority, having above him the Tribune of the Legion, the Governor of the Province, and above them all, Caesar. Below him in the chain of authority was a company of soldiers, and his household servants. When the centurion gave an order, he knew it would be obeyed, because behind it was the whole weight of the Roman Empire upholding his authority.

The centurion's faith was based on Christ's position in a chain of authority. He acknowledged that above Him was Almighty God, and that Christ had only to **"speak a word"** and his servant would be healed by the power of God. His faith was not misplaced. His servant **"was healed that same hour."**

Before a chain of authority can operate successfully, three conditions must be fulfilled.

1. The main consideration is that of OBEDIENCE. If there is perfect obedience throughout the chain, each link is upheld by the authority above it. On the other hand, if one link in the chain is disobedient, its authority is not upheld by those above it, and disorder results below it.
2. Submission to the higher authority involves an acceptance of its basic beliefs.
3. Each person in a chain of authority must be prepared to exercise the authority entrusted to his position.

The Operation of the Chain of Authority in a Family

Introducing the subject of authority in the family, the apostle Paul wrote, **"But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God."** [1 Corinthians 11:3]. This is a clear cut chain of authority. God is the head of all authority and power. Beneath him in the chain of authority is Christ, then man, and then woman.

In the family, God has ordained that the husband is to assume the responsibility, under Christ, as head of the family. He wrote to the Ephesian church, **"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as Christ is head of the church; and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their husbands in everything."** [Ephesians 5:22-24].

The husband is a type of Christ, and the wife is a type of the church. Just as Christ loves and nurtures the church, so the husband should love and care for his wife. Just as the church should submit to Christ as her head, so the wife is called to be subject to her own husband.

In the extended chain of authority, children are required to be obedient to their parents. **"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as it is fitting to the Lord...Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord."** [Colossians 3:18, 20].

Again, three things are necessary for this chain of authority to operate effectively.

1. There must be an acceptance of the authority of God the Father, and the of the Scriptures, through which He has designated these positions of authority.
2. Delegated authorities must exercise the authority entrusted to them. The husband must assume the responsibility of head of the family, believing that Christ, as his head, will guide him and

uphold him. Parents must exercise a responsible headship over their children. When the role of headship is accepted and exercised in the Lord, He is able to instil obedience in the chain.

3. There must be obedience by family members to the authority above them. Where there is a misuse of authority or disobedience at the top of the chain, there is disorder below it. This is one of the main reasons for the many disorderly, and even uncontrollable children in our modern society

The Angels Uphold God's Authority

In his discussion of authority in the family, Paul wrote, "**For this reason, the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.**" [1 Corinthians 11:10]. The words 'a symbol of' were not in the original manuscripts, but were interposed by translators. The true meaning is brought out more in the original text: "**the woman ought to have authority on her head (the covering authority of her husband) because of the angels.**"

The angels are responsible for upholding God's authority, and for being a 'hedge' of protection around us to guard us from Satan's attacks. Psalm 91 promises us that

"He shall give his angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways." [Psalm 91:11].

When we are obedient to God's authority, His mighty angels are directed to protect and preserve us and our families in all our ways. But when we rebel against God's authority, our hedge of protection has gaps in it. The God of justice and righteousness has to allow Satan's legal claims against us, and consequently we become subject to attacks from Satan's dark angels.

The Importance of the Family

The role of the family is vitally important in forming and maintaining a healthy church. Therefore it is important to see that the restoration of God's designated authorities in the family is of paramount importance in re-establishing the Lord's authority, and as a consequence, the restoration of the church. We can take comfort in Malachi's final prophecy:

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet (the ministry of the prophet) before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse." [Mal 4:5-6].

Whilst God ordained that man should adopt the role as head of the family, He also made it clear that this was not on the grounds of superiority. The same Paul who wrote "**the head of woman is man,**" also wrote, "**There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**" [Galatians 3:28].

Paul encouraged the interdependence of man and woman in their ministry to the Lord. "**Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord.**" [1 Corinthians 11:11]. The joint ministry of Aquila and Pricilla is a noteworthy example.

Chapter 6

OBEDIENCE TO DELEGATED AUTHORITIES IN THE BODY

Obedience to Ministerial Leaders

Because each of the ministerial positions (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers) are prepared and presented to the church by the Lord, it is absolutely imperative that their office in the church be accepted and obeyed. To honour their ministries is to honour the Lord their head. To be obedient to their ministries is to be obedient to the Lord, and therefore uphold His authority.

Restoration of the Office of Elders

Sadly, the biblical pattern of eldership has generally been replaced by a worldly alternative. Elders are elected democratically by the whole congregation on a short term basis as assistants to the minister.

Despite their biblical warranty to rule over the congregation, true elders are sometimes confronted with hostile opposition from those who would run the church as a democracy. The words of Korah, "**You take too much on yourselves...Why do you exalt yourselves above the congregation of the Lord,**"[Num 16:3], too often reflects the attitude of church members. Such people do not understand spiritual authority. Moses made it clear that those who rejected his authority were in fact rejecting the Lord.

As one of the most important aspects of restoring the Lord's authority, the authority of the office of the elder must be restored to the church. As future elders emerge and are shown to be fully prepared by the Lord, they should be recognized by existing elders, and appointed to the permanent office of elder. Once the office of the elder has been restored to the local church, members must learn to submit to elders as to those who "**watch out for (their) soul, as those who must give account.**" [Heb 13:17].

On the other hand, elders must exercise the authority entrusted to them by the Lord. They should meet regularly to discern the will of the Lord. They should be diligent in their oversight, particularly in the administration of the gifts of the Spirit to ensure that everything is "**done decently and in order.**" [1 Corinthians 14:40]. They must be prepared to exercise discipline amongst the members of the body so that the holiness of the sanctuary is preserved.

Obedience to All Ministries of the Body

The function of the primary ministries of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers (or elders), is for the "**equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying (or building up) of the body of Christ.**" [Ephesians 4:12]. The end result of their ministries being performed rightly is that the whole body is "**joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, (causing) growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.**" [Ephesians 4:16]. The body as a whole only functions effectively when "**every part does its share.**"

In the early church it was considered normal for every member to receive at least one gift of the Spirit, which was used in ministering to the body. Peter wrote, "**As each one has received a gift, minister to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.**" [1 Peter 4:10]. Each member was required to be a good steward of the gift entrusted to him, in ministering to the needs of other members of the body.

It follows that whoever has a gift of the Spirit has a ministry, and whoever has a ministry has authority from Christ in their ministry. Ideally, this should be every person in the body. To be submissive to a Christ appointed ministry is to be obedient to Christ the Head, who directs all ministries. When Peter said, "**all of you be submissive to one another,**"[I Pet 5:5], he did not mean that we should indiscriminately submit to the will and desires of everyone else. He meant that we should honour and submit to each other's ministries.

Chapter 7

OPPOSITION FROM THE SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST

Satan knows that when Christ's authority as head of the church is being upheld, not only is His will being obeyed, but the church itself has a perfect covering. It is not surprising therefore, that Satan's most vehement attack on the church has been directed towards the breakdown of spiritual authority. This onslaught has been directed by the spirit of Antichrist, who was already at work in the apostle John's day. He warned that **"every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world."** [I John 4:3].

Antichrist is Called the Lawless One

Paul called Antichrist **"the lawless one."** **"For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He (the Holy Spirit) who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one (Antichrist) will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming."** [2 Thessalonians 2:7-8].

Down through the ages of the church's history, the spirit of the Antichrist has been promoting lawlessness, constantly endeavouring to undermine the authority of Christ as head of the church. The thrust of his attack has been towards replacing spiritual authority with humanistic authority--obedience with lawlessness.

At first glance, the changes promoted by the spirit of the Antichrist are legitimate reforms, breathing new life into the tired structure of the church. From a worldly point of view, who could argue against the promotion of equal rights for women, church democracy, ministerial scholarship, and so on. But behind each 'reform' there is an undermining of the spiritual authorities designated by God.

There are many biblical and current prophecies that predict that the church must pass through a period of spiritual darkness and apostasy before the second coming of the Lord. This is the result of an assault by the spirit of the Antichrist, It is more subtle and seductive than previous attacks on the church, and therefore even more dangerous. However its main thrust is the same--to erode the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ as head of His church.

The New Age philosophies that Antichrist has perpetrated have one basic aim--to turn man's focus away from Jesus Christ as LORD, to man himself and the things he has created. Man is being encouraged to discover and unleash the vast reservoir of power within himself, to become happier, healthier, fulfilled, and even more spiritual. Even if not accepting the more radical philosophy that "man is a god," others are channelled into the many self-help therapies like, 'positive thinking,' 'possibility thinking,' 'creative visualization,' 'self-hypnosis,' 'yoga,' etc. This is the philosophy of humanism--that man has within himself the invisible energy forces of the universe that can change the world into a Utopia. And even more--that God expects him to do it.

The overall effect of the New Age Movement is to remove Jesus as the focal point of our life. Instead of a healthy dependence on the Lord as our way, our truth, and our life, and the Holy Spirit as our source of guidance, man is turned inward to discover his own psychic power and his own soulish energy. It is understandable that the world is captivated by the claims of seemingly limitless potential within man himself, but it is tragic that the same philosophies are being received and practiced within the church.

Chapter 8

RESTORATION OF CHRIST'S AUTHORITY--RESTORATION OF THE CHURCH

The foundation stone on which the restoration of the church sits is the restoration of the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus will return to a restored church, "**not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing....holy and without blemish.**" [Ephesians 5:27]. There will be a deluge of Holy Spirit power, and the glory of the Lord will fill the church, precipitating a huge harvest of souls. But until the headship and authority of the Lord is restored, such an outpouring of the Spirit would be uncontrolled, lawless, and chaotic.

Restoration in Practical Terms

In practical terms, restoration of the Lord's authority involves the following.

- The ministries set in the church by the Lord have to be re-established--namely, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.
- The whole of the body of Christ must honour and obey those in charge of these primary ministries **AS TO THE LORD**. There must be obedience to every ministry initiated by the Lord.
- The genuine office of the elders must be restored to the church. Oversight of the local church by professional clergymen must be substituted by the oversight of elders prepared and anointed by the Lord.
- The authority structure designated by God for the family must be accepted - namely, Christ is the head of the husband, the husband is the head of the wife, and the parents are the head of the children.
- The body must honour the authority of the Holy Spirit as the Lord's representative in the church.
- The authority of the Scriptures must be accepted as the word of God.
- Each person must exercise, and be responsible for the authority entrusted to him or her.
- We must recognize the true ministries of the Lord, and cooperate with what the Lord is doing through His servants.

Obedience Must be Established in the Body.

The Lord Jesus Christ was given the responsibility of re-establishing God's authority on earth. He laid the foundation by being "**obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.**" [Phil 2:8]. The responsibility of completing man's obedience to God has been entrusted to the church.

First of all authority has to be taught, and then obedience has to be worked out in us. In our early Christian life we were full of fleshly activity and short on obedience. As we discover authority and learn obedience, many of our fleshly activities cease, and we begin to bear lasting fruit.

When we uphold the authority of the Lord by our obedience, we are in fact re-establishing the authority of God, His head. Our first concern then as the body of Christ, is to be obedient to all that the Lord has initiated in the church--to His delegated authorities, and to the leading of the Holy Spirit, to the end that He is head of all things to the church.