

## The Kingdom of God Authority of the Kingdom

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The battle that is going on presently in the church is between “what is” and “what needs to come”. A very famous statistician who does research relative to the church has recently compiled statistics indicating that in the last ten years more than 20 million people have left the churches and he went on further to say that in interviewing a representative sampling of these people he is discovering that the reason for leaving is not because they are tired, or fed up with their life in the Lord or they have become discouraged or falling away. It is that they seem to be saying that they want a relationship to God... they want a relationship to God, but they do not consider church membership to be relevant to their relationship to God and in fact in a significant number of these people they made the statement that they felt that church membership was an impediment to their relationship to God. It is estimated that there is a population of somewhere between 60 and 70 million people who used to be church members who have simply left. Now to say this is to say, “Well, somebody is against the church.” No. It is saying something different. It is saying that people want a relationship to God but after years and years of church membership—indeed, after centuries of church membership—they do not necessarily connect church membership to their relationship to God.

Now the church could fight with that and say, “Well, these are just disgruntled people or these are just lawless people or these are just rebels.” Well if that’s true, in the aggregate there are more of these people outside of the churches than the top four or five major American denominations combined. So it is time that the church put away the notion that there is somehow just a handful of people agitating against the church. I’ll give you a more local example. In the state of Texas, in the city of Lubbock, I’m told that in the county of Lubbock there are approximately 250,000 residents of which better than 90% would say that they are believers in Jesus Christ and if you asked them if they were Christians they would say, “Yes.” And they would acknowledge that they were

saved. However, on any given Sunday, of all of the hundreds of churches throughout the city of Lubbock, only about 25,000 people of that county of 250,000... approximately 10% of the 250,000 people go to church on Sunday.

That's astonishing, and there is probably no place in the nation where the people are more conservative and religious and "God-fearing" –if you like—than Lubbock, Texas or Lubbock County. Ten percent—of the ninety percent of the population who would say they are believers—ten percent of the overall—25,000—actually consider church membership relevant enough to go. Now if you assume that all 25,000 were perfectly happy with the church and their membership and so on, that still leaves 90% of the people who do not consider church as relevant *and* of that 90% of the people only 10% would actually say they were unbelievers; 80% of the overall population would say they are believers. That is, the 80% who are not going to church would say that they were believers. What's going on?

Obviously, in the majority way people are saying that things need to change with the church and the answer begins with the understanding of what the church is. In a previous broadcast we spoke about what the church is. We said that when Jesus said—in **Matthew 16**, "Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."—He was speaking about "the called out". (Inserted – actual verse—"**And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.**" – **Matthew 16:18**) He was not speaking about an institution, He was not speaking about an organization; He was speaking about a community—people who belonged to the Lord and to each other.

The government of God was meant to operate among a people who saw themselves as a people among the people; who saw themselves as a nation among the nations. But that's what the Scriptures say, "You are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." (Inserted – actual verse—"**But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.**" – **I Peter 2:9**) That's how Peter put it. What we've been trying to do, since the days when Constantine gave the power of the state to support the church, we've been creating institutions to conserve this power. The institution of church is necessary if there is power derived from those who are governed or power derived from the goodwill of the state to be conserved—institutionally. That was the perversion.

When, in 313A.D. after Constantine and the Roman Empire were forced to admit that—over a period of 250 years, beginning with the reign of Domitian in the 80's and going through 313A.D. where the Christians had been

horribly persecuted and their civil rights taken from them—the Roman government and the Roman emperor was forced to admit that in spite of its best efforts to exterminate Believers—Believers that throughout the Roman empire had managed to conquer the Roman empire in the sense that the largest constituency of people and the most unifying of forces in the Roman empire were Christians. No, the Roman persecution did not succeed in exterminating Christians; in fact it succeeded in spreading Christianity throughout the Roman empire. It was the viable alternative to the decadence of the Roman empire. But—failing to recognize that and thinking it a *good* thing to be given the power of the state and support of the church—the leadership of the church in the early part of the fourth century accepted the offer of property, power, position and status that the Roman government offered it. But then it found itself needing to conserve that power so it created institutions and then, you see what an institution does is that it exists for its own benefit first and foremost and the people have no greater value than what value they have in contributing to the existence of, the survival of, and the promulgation of the institution.

The Kingdom of God, however, is very different. Here Jesus said, in **Matthew 16**, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for flesh and blood did not reveal this to you but my Father in heaven.” (Inserted – actual verse—**“Jesus replied, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.’” – Matthew 16:17**) Now what was it that Peter had as a revelation from God? The revelation was that you, Jesus, are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. The Father God gave Peter that revelation and then Jesus responded to Peter by saying, “I will tell you this: that you are Peter and on this rock (on the truth you have just announced that I am the Son of the Living God) I will build my church; I will establish those whom I have called out and the gates of hell shall not prevail against those whom I have called out and my establishment of them.” That’s what He is saying. “And I will give to you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven.” (Inserted – actual verse—**“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” – Matthew 16:18,19**)

So He connects the Kingdom of heaven to those who are called out and connects it in a manner that involves power because He says, “and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven.” So whenever you talk about the Kingdom you are talking about the authority by which the people who are “called out” *live* in the world. Now everyone has to have authority. Anytime you have a collection of people you must have authority... anytime there is a collection of people there must be authority. The people have to have a way by which they are to be governed.

Institutional government is for the benefit of the institution and people’s membership in the institution is the

dominant fact. However, if you are talking about a people “called out”, a people called to God, a people who have put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ then it is the power of Jesus Christ and not the power of the state and not the power of the governed that has to sustain them because the question is: why do you need power? The answer is: you have an enemy, an enemy who is committed to your extermination. Who is the enemy and why, therefore, must the power be sufficient to address the enemy? Jesus called the enemy, here, “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Hell, Satan, the kingdom of darkness, the evil one, the demonic—that’s the enemy. Paul puts it this way in **Ephesians the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter**, “For we wrestle, not against flesh and blood but against principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Inserted – actual verse—**“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” – Ephesians 6:12**)

There is an entire demonic realm that is opposed to the work of the Kingdom and opposed to the presence of Christ in the earth. The church is the presence of Jesus Christ in the earth today; it’s the corporate presence of Jesus Christ in the earth today. “Upon this rock I will establish those whom I have called out...” The word there—“ek-klesia”—means “the called out” and together the “called out” are also referred to as “the body of Christ”. I’ll show it to you. This is from the book of **Ephesians, the 5th chapter**. Here it is (**Ephesians 5 at verse 22**), **“Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church...”** (it is the same word, “ek-klesia”—“called out”) **“Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”** (Inserted – **Ephesians 5:22,23**) And it goes on to say that the husband should love his wife as Christ loved the church.

The connection here is obvious: the church, which is His body is the only description of the “called out”. It is the physical presence of Jesus Christ in the earth and this church, which is His body, is comprised of many members. Here it is: this is from the book of **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, chapter 12** beginning at **verse 12**, **“The body** (and he is speaking about the human body and he is going to analogize to the body of Christ)... **the body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; (verse 12 of I Corinthians 12) and though all its parts are many, they form one body.”** Now here is the application of the analogy: **“So it is with Christ.”** In other words, so it is with the body of Christ. **“For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.”** (Inserted – **I Corinthians 12:12-14**) And then he goes on to delineate what these parts might be and we’ll come

back in a subsequent message and deal more thoroughly with this but at this point let us look at this now to round it out: **verse 27, I Corinthians 12, “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed...”** and gives offices which we will come to. (Inserted – **I Corinthians 12:27,28a**)

Now what are we saying? We are saying that when Jesus said, “I will build my “ek-klesia”—that’s the word He used—He’s saying, “I will call people out, I will call them ‘my body’, I will be their head and that which opposes *me* in the earth—spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms, operating in principle part in the earth to extinguish my presence in my people—I will establish them with a sufficient authority. Such authority that what they bind will be bound and what they loose will be loosed.” So the question is: what is this authority that Jesus has that is sufficient to resist that which opposes His person in the earth? You see, you’ve got to understand these things; if we don’t understand them we’ll simply decide to change and “tweak a little bit more” the doctrines of the church. And what will we come up with? Tweaked doctrines... but *not* the change that is necessary.

What are people all over the world looking for? What are those 20 million people who have left the church in the last 10 years looking for? What are those 67 million people in the country, who used to be church members, who are not going anymore—what are *they* looking for? In my earlier example of Lubbock county, what are the other 80% of the people who don’t go to church on Sundays—what are they looking for? For the church to continue to pretend that everything is fine and that the problem is with the majority of people—most of whom used to be church members... Most churches are constantly going through membership because people are looking. In the majority of churches—even the fastest growing churches today—there is this rapid turnover of people cycling through because people are looking. Why are they not staying?

After September 11 there was a rush of people to the churches but they left as quickly as they came. Why are they not staying? The church’s answer? “Well, they are not serious.” That’s rubbish. Something is dreadfully wrong and I’m telling you what’s wrong. What is wrong is that the foundation of authority and power is not sufficient to resist the enemy who is against it because what Jesus said He would do is not what the church is, today. The model of the church today comes from Constantine and Rome and it substituted the power of the Holy Spirit for the power of the state supporting the church, or more lately today: the power of the people supporting the institution. The alternative is a grant of power from the Almighty God to the Lord Jesus Christ by which what we bind will be bound and what we loose will be loosed and by which we’ll be able to live out the destiny for which God created us.

Let's look at that here in the Scriptures. This is from the book of **Acts**, the **2<sup>nd</sup> chapter**. In **Acts 2**, the sermon of Peter on the day of Pentecost ends with this, "God raised him from the dead and made him both Lord and Christ...made him both Lord and Christ." (Inserted – actual verse—"**God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, 'The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.' 'Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.'**" – Acts 2:32-36)

Now why did God make Jesus, Lord *and* Christ? Let's go back and take a brief look at the end of **Matthew** and we'll come right back to "**both Lord and Christ.**" In **Matthew 28:18**, Jesus speaks about the grant of authority that He got from the Father by which His kingdom is to be established and by which the people who place their trust in Him might be confident that they can resist the evil one. Jesus said, in **Matthew 28:18**, "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.**" Now who had it to give? The Father. And the Father gave it to Jesus and on the basis of that authority, Jesus says, **verse 19**, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe whatever I have commanded you. And behold I will be with you always, even to the very conclusion of the age." (Inserted – actual verse—"**Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**" – Matthew 28:19,20)

The problem is, you see, we have never thought about whether or not the authority by which we do the things that we do is a sufficient authority to guarantee the outcome. The consent of the people is not a substitute for the authority that Jesus has which the Father gave Him. If you are going to go up against the enemy—"We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."—If you are going to go up against *that* enemy, the consent of the people as your empowerment is irrelevant. Why are we not making an impression in the nation? Why are the people leaving? The people are leaving because the churches are powerless. What are the people looking for? They are looking for the reality of a relationship to God in which the relevance of their lives—including the power they need to live the life God has put them here to live—is to be found.

The people are searching for their destiny and the church does not give them an answer because the church *cannot* give them an answer. Because the church depends upon the support of the people for its existence rather than upon

the power of Jesus Christ which He got from the Father, which He has delegated to us by the Holy Spirit. That's where we want to go in the next broadcast. We've begun to see that the power of the church, the power of the "called out", the power that empowers the body of Christ against the enemy of God and of the body—of the Lord Jesus Christ, the head, and of the body—*that* power is demonic in its origin and in its abilities. Human power is irrelevant, it requires divine power and Jesus has "all power in heaven and on earth". Now Jesus is seated on the throne in heaven; if He is, how does His authority come to us here on the earth? That's what we want to talk about: the delegation of power, the delegation of authority, in the next broadcast. My hope is that you'll join me as we explore that wonderful understanding. I'm Sam Soleyn and I hope you'll join me then.

### **Scripture References:**

Matthew 16: 18

I Peter 2: 9

Matthew 16: 17

Matthew 16: 18,19

Ephesians 6: 12

Ephesians 5: 22,23

I Corinthians 12: 12-14

I Corinthians 12: 27,28a

Acts 2: 32-36

Matthew 28: 18-20