

Why the Church's Authority Is so Much Greater Than You May Realize

As I attempt to read Scripture objectively, I am usually greatly impressed with the fact that I have yet to fully comprehend the vast authority God has granted to His people related to participating in His reign on the earth.

The fact that Jesus taught His followers to pray for His kingdom and will to be done on earth demonstrates that He has called us to be the primary vehicle to manifest and steward His kingdom in this realm (see Luke 11:2-4). Psalm 115:16 actually tells us that God has given the earth to the sons of men; Psalm 8:6 speaks about how God has granted mankind dominion over the works of His hands (on the earth), which refers back to the original cultural mandate God gave Adam and Eve in the very beginning of human history (see Gen. 1:28).

That being said, Jesus, as the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), fully restored back both the image of God (partially lost after the fall) to Christ followers, as we see in Ephesians 2:4—which is why He told the church to disciple the nations and exert His rule and stewardship in the created order (see Matthew 28:18-20).

In the New Testament, we see the implications of this vast rule demonstrated in both word and deed. One of the most mind-blowing of all passages for me is when Jesus actually told the (then) representatives of the Mosaic covenant (see Matt. 23:2) that they had the ability to stop people from entering into the kingdom of Heaven! (See Matt. 23:14.)

Jesus also taught His followers that they had the power to bind and loose things on the earth based on the authority given them from the heavens (see Matt. 18:18). In the context

of when He said this, He was actually referring to granting the church the power to adjudicate between believers who were in conflict with the authority to disfellowship reprobate people from the congregation of the Lord and to treat them as though they were not in covenant with God (see Matt. 18:15-18). This kind of authority is hard to fathom, and difficult to preach—due to the immaturity of the contemporary church as well as the potential of spiritual leaders to abuse their power and misrepresent the character of the Lord. However, we should not go in the opposite direction and make believe these passages do not exist or are not relevant. (Some may erroneously say that passages that refer to binding and loosing are only for the original 12 apostles, missing the fact that the context has to do with how the church should deal with conflict—guidelines that are obviously needed for every generation of the church.)

Jesus also gave the church the authority to forgive and release people from their sins (see John 20:23)— something the Roman Catholic system has used to create the confessional in which people in their church confess their sins to an ordained priest. James also admonishes the church to confess their sins to one another and pray for one another so they may be healed (see James 5:16).

Whatever your position and or interpretation is regarding these verses, one thing we can say is that God has entrusted the body of Christ with an awful responsibility of representing Him by walking in forgiveness toward others and by giving the church the power to put outside of fellowship those who lack the fruits of repentance and continue to sin in ways that damage the body of Christ. (Paul even says to mark those who cause division in the church and have nothing to do with them; see , Titus 3:10.)

Paul the apostle was entrusted with such authority, he even had the God-given right to hand an unrepentant sinner who was committing incest with his father's wife unto Satan for the

destruction of his flesh so his spirit would be saved in the day of Christ (see 1 Cor. 5).

The apostle Peter walked in such authority he became the vehicle in which a married couple was struck down dead for lying to the Holy Spirit (see Acts 5:1-11). His divine authority was also such that even his shadow released the power of God to heal the sick and cast out evil spirits (see Acts 5:15,16). Not only that, Ephesians 5:19 admonishes the church to recite the Psalms—in spite of the fact that approximately one-third of the Psalms are imprecatory songs—that is to say, songs that either pray for or declare the judgement of God upon the enemies of God!

Furthermore, one cannot deny the connection in the book of Revelation between the angel (or messenger) of the Lord, the prayers of the saints, and the release of divine judgement upon the people in specific places in the earth in answer to their prayers (see Rev. 5-19).

Consequently, even a cursory reading of both the first and second testaments points to the fact that, the more mature a Christ follower is—and the more a person has an intimate knowledge of the ways of the Lord through pouring over His Word and growing in His Spirit—an amazing amount of heavenly authority to participate with God in stewarding the earth is released! You can almost say, “The sky’s the limit”!! (God will not trust His authority to steward the earth with carnal believers whose unChristlike heart is set on selfish ambition, power and revenge, and who desire to build their own kingdom instead of promote God’s kingdom!)

Lastly, some of the biblical saints grew so intimate with Christ that God enabled them to participate in His heavenly council when He was deliberating with His select angels regarding divine actions about to take place (see Isa. 6, Jer. 23, 1 Kings 22:19-23). This is essentially what John the apostle experienced when he was caught up in the spirit on the

Lord's day and had a vision of the inner workings of the holiest place in the heavenly temple as recorded in the whole book of Revelation. Paul even said He heard things that he was forbidden to speak! (See 2 Cor. 12:1-4.)

Truly, the secret of the Lord is with those who delight and fear Him (see Ps. 25:14). In closing, because of all I related in this article, it behooves mature saints to be very careful what they say about other people, how they pray and how they live—because, somehow or another, God has granted believers to sit with Him in heavenly places (Eph. 2:4-6) and participate in His rule on the earth, which is one reason why He said “death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Prov. 18:21a) and why Jesus told us that faith-filled words can move mountains (see Mark 11:22,23). Hence, the more mature a believer gets, the more they understand their authority in Christ, and the more godly fear they should have related to how they walk out their faith in this world.

A Christian who is always bad-mouthing others, engaged in idle talk, gossip and being judgmental and exhibiting a critical spirit has yet to understand their role as members of His body and the divine power God has granted them to represent Him on this earth. Unfortunately, they are acting more like Satan, who accuses the church day and night before the Father (see Rev. 12:10)—which will not only limit the authority God will grant them, but will also aid the work of the evil one against the kingdom of God.

May the Lord teach the church the awful responsibility they have to represent Him and participate in His government in this world.

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