

Appendix: Proper Authority

This appendix is particularly geared toward those who may believe the truths in this book, or any other truths for that matter, against the prevailing beliefs of the leaders in charge of their church, assembly, or synagogue. In some forums today there is a false teaching that says you can only be submissive to God if you believe whatever doctrine your leaders may bring. This is not the kind of doctrine the Israelites in the Old Covenant followed, nor is it what the New Covenant apostles or the early Messianic believers taught.

Let's consider a few scriptures to get a true picture of the authority of each person to believe what their own conscience tells them is true. In one instance, Peter and John tell those sent from the high priest in Jerusalem that it is more important to obey God than to follow any rules from man, even from the high priest if they are contrary to God:

^{NAS} Acts 4:19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge;

Jesus held back certain truths when he knew that a better opportunity to reveal them would come later (John 16:12). Yet we see that when a truth was important to understand at the time, and the disciples knew it was from God, they did not shrink back from teaching it, even if the high priest forbade it.

When Peter was going astray by refusing to eat with the Gentiles in Antioch (when the prominent Jewish entourage arrived from Jerusalem), Paul confronted Peter. Paul understood that those Gentiles who had received the Messiah were not to be treated as unclean or as second-class citizens. He also knew that Peter had already been given a vision to this effect (Acts 10), so he made it very clear to Peter that his conduct was not right according to the Gospel:

^{NIV} Galatians 2:11 When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong.

Paul did not say, "Well, Peter is one of the inner circle of the Messiah, and an original apostle, so even when he's wrong we must submit, knowing that God will bring correction." No, seeing that others were also being drawn into this dissimulation (vs. 13), Paul stood up to something that was blatantly wrong.

The church I formerly attended taught the concept that even if the leader went astray, the believers should be like David, who was called to rule Israel when God was deposing King Saul, yet still remained submitted to the king, while Saul still held office. David felt it best to let God remove Saul, saying that he would not touch God's anointed. However, *we* are now in the New Covenant, and we do not have a king who rules over us. Instead, we have the Messiah who rules from heaven and who has given us his word and teaching. This does not mean there is no true

authority among those in charge of each assembly, because clearly there is. It only means that all authority must act as an extension from God and His truth, and not have its own agenda or doctrines that do not line up with scripture. When authority goes sideways of God, we are not required to follow it. The Messiah is the head of the assembly (under God), and all other authority must be an extension of the teaching he has brought or of the understandings he may bring by the spirit through his called teachers. Any new understandings would not contradict the word of God.

Even in the days of King Saul Israel did not blindly follow the king's every command. When Saul's legalism (concerning an oath) required him to put his own son Jonathan to death for eating some honey, the Israelites rose up against this. They argued that Jonathan, who had not heard the oath, had fought valiantly for the Lord (1 Samuel 14). Thus by standing up to King Saul when he was clearly wrong, they were able to save the son's life. Jonathan would later go on to be a huge support to David.

^{NAS} 1 Samuel 14:45 But the people said to Saul, "Must Jonathan die, who has brought about this great deliverance in Israel? **Far from it!** As the LORD lives, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day." **So the people rescued Jonathan and he did not die.**

The Jews living in the first century were similarly minded. They did not blindly follow their religious leaders when their leaders were mistreating a prophet, as they held Jesus to be:

^{NAS} Matthew 21:45 And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them.

^{NAS} Matthew 21:46 And when they sought to seize Him, **they feared the multitudes, because they held Him to be a prophet.**

Same thing with John the Baptist when Herod wanted to put him to death:

^{NAS} Matthew 14:3 For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip.

^{NAS} Matthew 14:4 For John had been saying to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her."

^{NAS} Matthew 14:5 And although he wanted to put him to death, **he feared the multitude, because they regarded him as a prophet.**

Even those members of the powerful Jewish Sanhedrin knew the people would follow God above their own commands. For when they commanded that Jesus be arrested, they said for him *not* to be arrested during the Festival, **lest there be a riot among the people** (Matthew 26:3-5).

The Sanhedrin did not say “go ahead and arrest him right in the Festival, for these Israelites will submit to *our* authority even above what God commands.” They knew the people would never allow their leaders to disregard God’s Sabbath laws, and they wanted to avoid a riot.

It is possible that standing up for truth is what Paul alludes to after telling the Corinthians that the head of every man is Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3). For he then says that nature itself shows it’s a shame for a man to have long hair (vs. 14, 15). Remember the Jewish idiom of the natural to spiritual. There is *natural* long hair, which God gives to the woman in part to show submission, and there is *spiritual* long hair whereby man removes God (and the authority extended to Christ) from the head and instead places a man on earth as his ultimate head. In other words, Paul is quite possibly saying that the Corinthians should hold to truth, and not submissively yield (essentially having long hair) to any tradition, ordinance, or doctrine *of men* that does not come down from God through Christ (vs. 2, 14). Earlier, Paul had admonished them for saying they were of Paul or of Apollos (1 Corinthians 3:4-11), for Christ was to be their head.

Some may not agree with this point and that’s fine, but the rest of the scripture in this section stands on its own. The biblical history of the Jews does not portray a people who remain in perfect submission to their leaders when those leaders have gone astray or are contrary to God. Proper biblical submission does not replace the legitimate line of command—from God through the Messiah—with an earthly leader. Rather the earthly shepherd is to be an *extension* of the teaching that comes from God’s spirit or is revealed by the Messiah. Believers should not feel forced to yield to popular traditions, rituals, or teachings that do not line up with the scriptures. Proper authority does not require the leaders to be perfect, however, for there are no perfect earthly leaders. It only requires them to be extensions of the Messiah who seek to be honest before God and open to truth.

Returning now to King Saul’s day, when the Israelites wanted a king to rule over them and Saul was about to be appointed, God saw this as *their rejection of Him, in not allowing God to lead:*

^{NAS} 1 Samuel 8:4 Then **all the elders of Israel gathered together** and came to Samuel at Ramah;

^{NAS} 1 Samuel 8:5 and they said to him, “Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations.”

^{NAS} 1 Samuel 8:6 But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” And Samuel prayed to the LORD.

^{NAS} 1 Samuel 8:7 And the LORD said to Samuel, “Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for **they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them.**”

So we see that all the elders of Israel were united in belief, yet they still completely missed God's will. This was not the only time Israel's leaders were united but wrong, for at one point they were united in Ahithophel's plan to put King David to death (2 Samuel 17:1-3). David was the king whom God said was a man after His own heart, yet the leaders were deceived into thinking he should die, and agreed on a plan to accomplish this:

^{NAS} 2 Samuel 17:4 So the plan pleased Absalom **and all the elders of Israel**.

Later, God promised Israel that He would raise up shepherds who would properly guide them:

^{NAS} Jeremiah 3:15 "Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding.

However, these shepherds must be willing to yield to any new truths that God brings forth, for God is always the highest authority. God warns of some who assume the position of shepherds yet do not feed the proper truths and doctrine that God desires for the people:

^{NAS} Jeremiah 23:2 Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: "You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds," declares the LORD.

^{NAS} Ezekiel 34:2 "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, 'Thus says the Lord God, "Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock?"

^{NAS} Jeremiah 50:6 "My people have become lost sheep; Their shepherds have led them astray. They have made them turn aside *on* the mountains; They have gone along from mountain to hill And have forgotten their resting place.

People are not rebellious for holding to a doctrine they believe is from the Messiah, even though their assembly leader may not believe in it. For when it comes to the New Covenant authority structure, Jesus is the head of every man (1 Corinthians 11:3) and of the assembly:

^{YLT} Ephesians 5:23 because the husband is head of the wife, as also the **Christ is head of the assembly**, and he is saviour of the body,

Thus for a leader or teacher in the Assembly to expect others to submit to a certain doctrine, this person would have to be an extension of Christ's authority, teaching pure doctrine that properly aligns with the scriptures. Knowing the nature of man, Jesus warned the apostles to not see themselves as great, powerful leaders or as Fathers (meaning in a position of being a spiritual father over other believers):

^{NAS} Matthew 23:8 “But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and **you are all brothers.**”

^{NAS} Matthew 23:9 “And do not call *anyone* on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.

^{NAS} Matthew 23:10 “And do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, *that is*, Christ.

Of course Jesus did not mean all of this literally, because it is not wrong to call your dad “father” or to be called a “leader” in an assembly. Paul uses the same Greek word translated as “teacher” (above) for a position in the church in Ephesians 4:11. What the Lord meant was that he did not want them to become exalted authorities, seeing themselves as great rulers, being the source of all truth, or as spiritual fathers who could lord it over others, but rather to be humble and see each other as “brothers.” He wanted us to always remember that the true source of the proper teaching comes from God through Christ, “for one is your teacher.”

There are a few scriptures that have been taken out of context to imply a powerful ruling by church leaders, such as the following verse:

^{KJV} 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.

However, by looking at the original Greek, while also considering the established church history, the true meaning of this scripture becomes clearer. The *King James Bible* was translated during a time when a growing number of Protestants were withdrawing from Roman Catholic authority as they realized that many of the doctrines and rituals taught by the Catholic Church were not contained in the Bible. If the above verse is true as translated—without any qualifications—then the Protestants should have returned to Roman Catholic authority, saying to themselves that God would work it all out, and that they must “obey them that have the rule over you.” Thankfully, for all who enjoy freedom of thought and choice, they did not follow through with this reasoning.

Knowing that God is always the highest authority, a scriptural doctrine that comes from a church authority has to line up with God’s word, otherwise it does not have to be followed. In the same sense, obviously a church leader could not command another person to rob a bank and expect submission based on the above scripture. Since other scripture teaches us to not steal, that would be the higher authority we would follow, instead of such an earthly command from a wayward or corrupt leader.

There are a few aspects of the Greek that help to give a better picture of what this scripture truly means, particularly the words translated, “Obey them that have the rule over you.” The Greek verb for obey (Πείθεσθε) is passive here, meaning to “be persuadable.” It does not mean to empty

your mind and insert whatever any church leader tells you. Instead, it means to be willing to move out of a doctrinal position (such as a church tradition) and into a new truth when the teacher convinces you with sound logic of its veracity. The Greek word ἡγουμένους, translated as those who “**rule over**” you, simply means those who “lead, guide, or are regarded among you as leaders and teachers.” The original Greek does not picture a Roman Church or other church leaders **ruling over you** with unquestioned power from God, but rather portraying that we be *persuadable* when solid scriptural truth is brought forth by God’s called teachers or leaders.

Paul commended those in Berea, saying they were “more noble-minded” than others he had taught, because they sought the word of God and checked if Paul's teaching really aligned with the scriptures:

^{NAS} Acts 17:10 And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

^{NAS} Acts 17:11 Now **these were more noble-minded** than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, **to see whether these things were so.**

Paul did not rise up with insecurity and say, “How dare you question my teaching for I am a called apostle of God.” No, Paul was glad to see them searching out the scriptures to verify that his teaching aligned with them. Some leaders may demand unquestioned submission to every word they teach, even forbidding others to seek out or discuss certain doctrines. Peter, however, warned that the leaders not behave as overlords but rather be good examples:

^{NAS} 1 Peter 5:2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

^{NAS} 1 Peter 5:3 **nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge**, but proving to be examples to the flock.

Romans chapter 13 is another portion of scripture that is often taken out of context concerning authority. Some have interpreted it as meaning that believers should submit to any and all rulers at all times. Some things Paul writes in chapter 13 do apply to secular rulers, and that we should obey the rules of the governments that we live under (paying tribute, etc...) so as to have a peaceable life. Yet the commands of secular rulers would always be secondary to God’s commands, otherwise everyone would be obligated to obey the Antichrist and take the mark of the beast, in opposition to God.

Paul does not mean for us to submit to any and all rulers, or any and all teaching, because he understands that God's authority always comes first. If the God-anointed scriptures tell us to prove all things (1 Thessalonians 5:21), then we are to follow God's will and prove each doctrine, regardless of whether any church leader forbids or commands a particular belief. If we believe that a doctrine is true and from God, then we are commanded to hold to it, yet be open if God reveals new light on any truth. Remember, Paul rebuked Peter to his face when he knew Peter was in the wrong by treating the Gentiles as second-class citizens. Paul therefore *did not follow* what some people claim he is teaching in Romans 13 by submitting to Peter (who was one of the Lord's inner circle, and an original apostle) when he knew Peter was wrong, but instead he pointed out the error.

God established authority for the family: the children were subject unto their parents until they came of age and the husband was given authority (concerning the home) over the wife. These positions were set up as a type, pointing forward to the Messiah being the head of the spiritual bride. So God always had established authority.

In Old Covenant days, when God gave Israel the Promised Land, the Israelites did not come into the land and say "Oh, these evil authorities in the land don't want to yield to us, we must obey these Kings of Caanan." To the contrary, they knew that God was the higher authority. God clearly said to drive out those ungodly nations (even though God had previously said "Thou shalt not kill"). Israel understood that the commandment to drive out those nations superseded His commandment to not kill. In the Old Covenant they were fighting for an earthly kingdom, because God had plans to bring forth a Messiah and wanted Israel as a nation separated unto Himself to fulfill this plan. In the New Covenant we are not fighting for an earthly kingdom but for a spiritual one, where the weapons and the armor are spiritual (2 Corinthians 10:3–5, Ephesians 6:10–18). Jesus was not against fighting; he said that *if* his kingdom were of this earth, his servants would fight. But his kingdom is a spiritual kingdom (John 18:36), so we do not war with earthly means.

If history teaches us anything about those who have authority over men, it is that sometimes they take this authority unto themselves to set up their own kingdoms, as it were. This is why Jesus told the apostles not to see themselves as great leaders and teachers over men but rather to see themselves as brothers. We have seen in other scriptures that leaders are warned not to lord it over the flock. Yes, there is authority in the assembly that comes from God, but it must always be a proper extension of God's heart and mind. There is also a sense in which all people are to be subject to one another, and that goes for rulers like Peter, should any ever stray from God's heart:

^{KJV} 1 Peter 5:5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. **Yea, all of you be subject one to another**, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

Throughout history God has shown that some in the position of shepherds will lead the people astray, instead of leading them to follow the Lord:

^{NAS} Jeremiah 10:21 For the shepherds have become stupid And have not sought the LORD; Therefore they have not prospered, And all their flock is scattered.

^{NAS} Jeremiah 23:2 Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: “You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,” declares the LORD.

^{NAS} Jeremiah 50:6 “My people have become lost sheep; **Their shepherds have led them astray**. They have made them turn aside *on* the mountains; They have gone along from mountain to hill And have forgotten their resting place.

^{NAS} Ezekiel 34:8 “As I live,” declares the Lord God, “surely because My flock has become a prey, My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd, and My shepherds did not search for My flock, but *rather* the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock;

However, God also promises to raise up shepherds who have God’s heart and provide good food:

^{NAS} Jeremiah 3:15 “Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding.

God’s called leader Gideon did not want to be a ruler over the people. He wanted the Lord to rule:

^{NAS} Judges 8:23 But Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you.”

The goal of this Appendix is not to attempt a full explanation of proper church authority. It is to focus on the authority of each believer—before God—to use his or her own reasoning and come to a conclusion, without being labeled a heretic. Not agreeing with every doctrine a particular leader might insist to be the word of God does not make one a heretic or a dissident.

If the way some interpret Paul’s teachings in Romans 13 is true, then we should all repent and go back under the Roman Catholic Church, from which the Protestants rebelled. However this would necessitate replacing Christ as the head and teacher of doctrine, with mans authority.

We must use the example of the spiritual leaders in Acts 15, where Paul, Peter, James, some elders, and even some of the Pharisees came together and yielded to what the spirit of God was bringing. Paul showed that the true sons of God are those who are led by God’s spirit:

^{YLT} Romans 8:14 for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, **these** are the sons of God;

This scripture does not say “as many as are led only by a pastor, priest, or rabbi,” but those who are led by the spirit of God. This does not contradict the fact that God provides and anoints His called leaders and teachers, and that we need those provisions from God, but ultimately it is His spirit that will be leading us to perfection. Those who are ultimately led by God’s spirit are the ones He considers true sons and daughters.

The Lord, in fact, warns that those who do not receive a love for the truth are vulnerable to further delusion:

^{KJV} 2 Thessalonians 2:10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; **because they received not the love of the truth**, that they might be saved.

^{YLT} 2 Thessalonians 2:11 and because of this shall God send to them a working of delusion, for their believing the lie,

The Lord is not seeking a bride that will resist him over what is truth and what is proper doctrine. She will not say, “But my people always saw it this way, and I refuse to consider new truth with an open heart, because I stick with what my pastor, my denomination, or my rabbi says.” The Lord looks for those who will yield to His word:

^{NAS} Isaiah 66:2 “For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being,” declares the LORD. “But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles **at My word**.

The spiritual bride will be those who are teachable and yielded to God's truth. The people who seek this relationship with the Lord will be willing to accept any truth that is anointed from God, and will seek to verify that it lines up with the scriptures that He has given:

^{YLT} 2 Timothy 2:15 be diligent to present thyself approved to God -- a workman irreproachable, rightly dividing the word of the truth;