

Doctrine of Spiritual Authority

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As we begin our study let us remember that God Almighty is in a position of authority over all of creation, both spiritual and natural. This authority is inherent in the creator, and any authority bestowed upon his creatures, is a work of his grace and is known as divinely delegated authority. Remember also that wherever there is legitimate authority through divine delegation, there will be rebellion against that authority. Let us consider this doctrine carefully so that we will find ourselves submitting to God's authority in humility, and not be found resisting god in rebellion and deception.

The Throne of God

Whenever we see this term in Scripture it refers to the absolute authority of God. The acts of God issue from His throne, and His throne is established on His authority. All things are created through God's authority and all physical laws of the universe are maintained by His authority. Hebrews 1:3 explains it this way, **“Upholding all things by the word of his power.”** The word “upholding,” in this passage is translated from the Greek word *“phero,”* which means to maintain. It would best be translated into English as maintains because, upholds can convey the idea of passive support of a burden.

Maintain implies active involvement. He holds all things together and in their proper relationship to each other by his own power. The oceans are held in their beds, the rivers run down into the sea, the heavenly bodies are held in their orbit, all by His power. His power is His authority in action, and all power comes from His throne which is **“established by righteousness”** (Proverbs 16:12), and described as a throne **“of holiness”** (Psalm 47:8). It is this very throne of authority that Satan rebelled against, not wishing to submit to counsel and will of God.

Rebellion Introduced

Isaiah 14:12-15 reveals to us where evil entered the scene, and Ezekiel 28:13-17 reveal the first acts of sin. Isaiah records the attack against **God's authority**, while Ezekiel records the attack against **God's holiness**. The act of sinning was not the cause of Satan's fall; the act was but the product of his heart rebellion against God's authority. In the Isaiah passage five times Satan says “I will” in opposition to God's will, finally stating the evil in his heart by saying, **“I will be like the most high.”**

Authority, the Centerpiece of Warfare

The controversy of the universe is centered on who shall have the authority, and our warfare with Satan's kingdom, (Ephesians 6:11-12), is the direct result of our desire to submit to God's authority. In 1 Peter 5:8, we are told that, **“Satan walketh about seeking whom he may devour.”** The key word here is, “whom,” for you see Satan cannot devour anyone who submits to God's authority, for by submitting to God's authority through yielding to the Holy Spirit (Romans 6:12-15), we find God's overpowering strength at our disposal. James 4:7 tells us that by submitting to God, the result is Satan fleeing from the power of God in us.

There are many who claim to be submitted to the authority of God, yet their consistent disobedience reveals that, **“their lips draw near to God, but their hearts are far from Him”** (Isaiah 29:13). Let us therefore draw near to God with humility of heart, and say **“not my will but Thy will be done”** (Luke 22:42).

Two Types of Authority

God's authority can be described in this way. There is inherent authority which Webster's dictionary defines as authority, “existing in someone or something as a natural and inseparable quality, characteristic, or right.” To illuminate further, this means that the authority that God has, was not given to Him by another. He possesses it by nature, and essence. He is the only one who this can be said about, for all others who are in authority, are delegated their authority by the decree of God, even if not by His perfect will. [This last statement of mine can be easily proven through the scriptures.]

God's design for all His creatures was to be in submission to His authority, and yet He gave them free wills, so that their submission would be voluntary and not automatic. Satan rebelled, (Isaiah 14:12-15) and many angels followed his lead (Rev. 12:7-9, Jude 6). They could do this only because of God's permissive will. In other words, God did not cause the rebellion, but He permitted it to happen.

The rebellion of Satan does not affect the authority of God; it remains supreme, and God's holiness is intact. Although Satan could not change God, his rebellion would eventually play a part in the fall of man when, in Genesis chapter three, he convinces Adam and Eve to rebel against God's authority.

God's desire or perfect will was for all of His creatures to live in peace and joy under a theocracy, and yet our free will would not have it so. Just as Israel rejected God's authority over them desiring a human king (1 Samuel 8:7), we **“like sheep have gone astray”** (Isaiah 53:6), therefore, we must learn to yield to the Holy Spirit and the authority of God's word in our lives. We must also learn to yield to God's delegated authority present on this earth.