

Study 4. God's Authority to Rule

Growing Faith in God

The One Who Is With Us Always

Do you remember the first time you got behind the wheel of a car? My first car was a British Morris Mini. It was a tiny car by American standards. It had an 850-cc (less than 1 liter) engine and could only get above 65 miles an hour if it went downhill! It cost me sixty British Pounds Sterling, around one hundred dollars (The car was 20 years old). The one good thing was that it would get fifty miles for each gallon of gas. I practiced driving by getting out into the country where few other cars were on the road. Getting behind the wheel for the first time was so exciting and yet scary.

When I started working as a commercial fisherman with my father, he soon put me behind his boat's wheel (the helm) of the *Why Worry*. That was a different animal and wasn't as easy as it looked. There were so many unknown factors to consider. The East coast of England can be very windy, blowing the boat in different directions, and then there was the variable tidal flow, which could sometimes be five miles an hour. It could be challenging to judge the tidal flow when I came alongside the quay to unload the fish. There were many things to learn about maneuvering a fishing boat. And then, of course, there were no brakes! My dad was always ready to step in and take the controls when the wind and tide conditions made it difficult for me to bring the boat alongside the pier. When I was scared or nervous, all I had to do was call, and he came quickly to my side.

Our heavenly Father is like that. He trains us in incremental steps to reach out to Him in small steps at first. When we know that Abba (our Father) is with us, we know that we can't go seriously wrong, for we know we can call on Him for help. He has promised, "**Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you**" (Hebrews 13:5). Twice in the Scriptures, the Lord stood alongside Paul the apostle at critical times in his life, giving him strength and encouragement (Acts 23:11 and 2 Timothy 4:17). We may not see Him with our natural eye, but He is always there with us. The Lord watches over all that love Him (Psalm 145:20). Everything the Father asks us to do is always in concert with Him; we are called God's fellow workers (2 Corinthians 6:1).

Being the perfect model, Jesus said, "**By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear...**" (John 5:30). In another place, He said: "**Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does**" (John 5:19). If the Son of God could do nothing without the Father leading Him, it is even more true for you and me. The more this truth sinks into our spirit, the more we can rest in God that it is His ministry, not ours. This means that all the Father is asking for is our obedience! When we pray for a sick person to be well, leaving the results with God is okay if we don't see Him at work. Sometimes His healing happens at night when the person is alone with God. We do not have to make God look good, and we don't have to make ourselves look good. If Christ "**made himself of no reputation**" (Philippians 2:7 KJV), it must be the same with His servants. We take the step of faith in obedience to the Father and believe He will work, but the results are up to Him. Our part is to listen, obey, and trust His power, authority, and timing. This trust in God takes a burden off our shoulders. Remember, His yoke is easy, and His burden is light!

Our previous study discussed that if you have sincerely given your life to Christ, you have entered into a close relationship with Him through a blood covenant. A covenant is a legal agreement or contract between two parties, a covenant that is solemn and binding. We have become one with Him spiritually (Colossians 1:27; 1 Corinthians 6:17). When I gave my life to Christ; I didn't look much different, maybe with a bigger smile on my face and fewer lines on my forehead. The difference was more internal, in the unseen part of us, the area of our soul and spirit. The Bible says we were made **“alive with Christ even when we were dead in trespasses and sins”** (Ephesians 2:5). Those of us who have given our lives to Christ have entered into a covenant with God and have promised that the LORD will be our God and that we will be faithful to Him, no matter what happens in this life.

Bought from Satan's Dominion

We are no longer our own, we have been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20); the precious blood of Christ is the redemption payment that set us free from Satan's dominion.

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves (Colossians 1:13).

What does it mean that we were under Satan's dominion before we came to Christ? How did we get under Satan's control in the first place?

When the devil tempted Jesus in the desert, Satan took Christ to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. **“All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me”** (Matthew 4:8). How could Satan offer something to Christ that was not his to offer? How can that be, for the Scripture says that the Earth is the Lord's? (Psalm 24:1). Jesus never disputed Satan's claim that dominion over the Earth was his. In fact, in two other places, the Lord upheld Satan's legal claim by calling Satan **“the prince of this world”** (John 12:31 and 14:30).

Satan managed to gain legal rule and dominion over the Earth when he deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden. When Adam chose to listen to Satan's voice, even though it came through the mouth of Eve, he was not deceived; he willingly decided to go along with what the serpent (Satan, according to Revelation 20:2) wanted of him. In his letter to Timothy, Paul tells us: **“And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner”** (1 Timothy 2:14). Adam made a conscious choice to disobey God, choosing to listen to Satan's voice and obey him by eating the fruit; his decision brought him into servitude to Satan. He decided to be a slave to sin. We serve whomever we listen to and obey:

Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? (Romans 6:16).

Whomever we listen to and offer ourselves to obey, we are slaves to the one we obey. We are slaves to sin and Satan, or servants of God, and choose to follow Him.

Rulership Of the Earth

Humanity has not always been under Satan's dominion. When our ancestor, Adam, was created, he was made in the image of God and given dominion over the Earth. We have lost something since those early days of the human race, for we read that Adam had the mental capacity to provide names for all the animal and bird creation (Genesis 2:19-20). God gave the responsibility for the Earth to Mankind to rule over all He had made:

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them **rule** over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, **over all the earth**, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. **Rule** over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1:26-28 Emphasis mine).

In what ways do you think that Adam was to “rule over all the earth”? How do you think this looked?

The Hebrew word *radah*, translated with our English word “rule,” means to “rule over or subdue.”¹ God gave responsibility and authority over all of creation to Adam and his descendants. I presume that even the king of the beasts, the lion, could be spoken to by man under God's authority, and the lion would obey. Such was man's dominion and authority before the Fall in the Garden of Eden. King David, speaking by the Spirit, says something very similar:

³When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon, and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? ⁵You made him a little lower than the **heavenly beings** and **crowned him with glory and honor**. ⁶You made him **ruler** over the works of your hands; **you put everything under his feet** (Psalm 8:3-6 Emphasis mine).

The Hebrew word *mashal*, translated with the English expression "ruler" in Psalm 8, verse 6, indicates that Adam and his descendants are God's managers, governors, or stewards over the earth. *Mashal* means to “rule, reign, govern, have dominion over, and manage.”² Man was different from the other created beings due to being crowned with glory and honor and made ruler over the Earth. He alone was created in the image of God and could rule with grace and justice. He was God's representative. He was created in the image of God, showing forth the likeness of the One True God, representing God's heart and will for His creation. Under the inspiration of the Spirit in the verses above, David says that man, in his original creation, was made a little lower than *Elohim*, the Hebrew word for God. Many translations render this word differently, and some translate it as *heavenly beings*, but Scripture says that Adam was made just a little lower than God. “*Elohim*” is the Hebrew word almost always used to speak of God. Some English translations record the change by putting it into the notes at the bottom or in the margins. How magnificent Adam must have been, crowned with glory and honor, fully equipped by God for his managerial role over the Earth.

¹ Key Word Study Bible, AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, TN. Page 1550.

² Ibid, Page 1530.

God put everything on Earth under Adam's feet, symbolizing rulership and dominion over all creation (v. 6).

The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth he has **given** to man (Psalm 115:16 Emphasis mine).

The Hebrew word *Nathan*, translated as the English word "given," means to assign. The earth is the territory man has been assigned to rule. The heavens and the earth belong to the Lord, but the Scriptures clarify that God has given stewardship of the Earth to humanity to govern and take care of. This thought of mankind being given responsibility is also brought out in Genesis 2:15, “**Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.**” The Hebrew word *Shamar* translated with the English words "take care of," means: “to keep, guard, protect and preserve, as a watchman cares for his cattle or sheep.” Adam and his descendants were assigned the task of governing and stewardship of Earth.

In the Fall of Mankind, Adam gave away his right and dominion to rule into the hands of Satan. Satan, with impunity, could say to Christ at the temptation, “**I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to**” (Luke 4:6). Satan was not offering Jesus something that he did not have. If so, Jesus would not have been tempted by this. Satan was offering Jesus something in his hands to use as leverage. He sought to induce Christ to act outside the Father's will and bypass the cross.

This spiritual authority given to humanity over the earth is why humanity's redemption had to come through a Man. God gave stewardship of Earth to Adam's race, and only one of the human race could win it back. Humankind was the trustee of the earth. Satan could legally do anything he wanted to Adam's progeny because they became slaves of Satan due to Adam's choice to obey Satan rather than God. All it took was one act of disobedience. A man had to be found upon whom Satan had no claim. That's why Christ had to be born of a virgin. It is no wonder that the concept of the Virgin birth is under attack and something that the enemy wants to refute as foolish. It is an essential element in the Redemption story.

The Redemption of Man at the Cross of Christ

The Messiah, the Christ, had to be one of Adam's race but not tainted by sin; otherwise, He would have been owned and dominated by Satan, having Adam's nature. Christ was 100% man but 100% God as well, being conceived of the Holy Spirit. Satan, therefore, had no claim on the Innocent Christ. Divine law says that “**Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man**” (Genesis 9:6). In other words, when Satan used religious and political leaders of the day to bring Jesus to the cross, for the first time under divine law, he became a murderer because Jesus was completely innocent, having never sinned. Satan was stripped of the keys of death and Hell at the cross (Revelation 1:18). Every man that makes Christ's death his own by believing and trusting in His death to be the payment for their sin is made righteous before God. Eternal justice was satisfied at the cross. Satan was legally condemned as a murderer in the courts of heaven because he had no right to kill Jesus due to His sinless life. Just before the cross, Jesus said:

Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out (John 12:31).

This judgment of Satan began at the cross but will be fulfilled when he is bound (Revelation 20:1-3). Until then, God's people, the Church, must understand our position and authority in Christ.

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms (the original Greek manuscripts say, "in the heavenlies." Ephesians 3:10).

Satan and his demons do not want you to understand the full implications of the verse above. Paul says it is God's intent and plan for you, as a Christian, to stand in complete opposition against demonic rulers and authorities that are invisible around us. Through our faith in God, we are to declare to them that they no longer have any legal ground to stand on, that this territory we stand on belongs to God, and that they should leave. Remember that this was the reason why Christ died! Not only to buy you out of Satan's dominion by His death on the cross but also to empower you to stand as a soldier of Christ in entire opposition to every evil work around you. We can begin to take the authority that Christ has given us and rule over the evil rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **Therefore go** and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (Matthew 28:18-20).

What did Jesus command the early disciples? He commanded them to teach others what He taught them—to heal the sick, cast out demons, and preach the Gospel (Luke 9:1-2, Luke 10:9, 17). In our day, we are to do the same:

Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing... You may ask me for anything in my name and I will do it (John 14:12-14).

The same authority and power given to the twelve disciples are also given to us. Satan has no legal right of ownership over us. God, in Christ, has "brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves" (Colossians 1:13). The authority Satan once had over us is destroyed. Only our unbelief hinders the flow of the Holy Spirit's power and authority in and through us. God chooses the weak things of the world to confound the strong (1 Corinthians 1:27). Do you feel inadequate? Then God has chosen to use you to glorify Him!

By virtue of His death on the cross, Christ has nullified every claim Satan had against any of us in Christ. The authority Satan once exercised against us has passed to the Lord Jesus Christ and all those in covenant relationship with Him—the Body of Christ, the Church of the Living God. We are to exercise God's authority under the leadership and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. No matter how young or old we are, we Christians are made ambassadors of God (2 Corinthians 5:20). In a legal and spiritual sense, we have been given power of attorney to exercise the will of heaven upon the earth. Our lack of faith in God is the only hindrance to exercising our authority. In the

same way that electricity flows through copper cable, faith is the channel to the authority and power of God to see His work accomplished.

Exercising God's Authority.

Let's look at a Bible passage from the Acts of the Apostles to see an example of men without a relationship with God trying to oppose demonic spirits:

⁸Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. ⁹But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord. ¹¹God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, ¹²so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured, and the evil spirits left them. ¹³Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." ¹⁴Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. ¹⁵(One day) the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" ¹⁶Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. ¹⁷When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor (Acts 19:8-17).

Reading this passage above, what things do you think were responsible for the rapid spread (v. 10) of the message of the Kingdom of God throughout the area?

Paul taught the people boldly about the Kingdom of God, the things you and I are learning together. When some people resisted Paul's message as he preached in the synagogue, he went to the Hall of a philosopher called Tyrannus and taught the people daily. One manuscript³ brings out the fact that Paul taught daily from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. This equipping/teaching time was during the siesta when most people took off work, as the heat was peak during those hours. Paul paid his way through his tent-making occupation to be able to give his time to teach five hours a day. During this time, the Word of God spread rapidly, and the seven churches spoken about in the second and third chapters of the Book of Revelation came into being.

Due to the equipping ministry of Paul, Ephesus became an evangelistic center for the Gospel. Paul's teaching on the Kingdom of God and equipping ministry in the Lecture Hall of Tyrannus resulted in a multiplication of church planters all over Asia Minor. Some Jews, who were not Christians, tried to exercise the same authority to cast out demons but with disappointing results. The demon inside the man tore the clothes off of the sons of a Jewish chief priest and beat them up severely. Spirits can see if you have a relationship with God or not. These men did some dabbling in the area of exorcism but were jealous of the power and authority of Paul. They even tried to use his name in the casting out of the spirit. They had no faith in the Lord Jesus and,

³ William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible, Acts of the Apostles*, Saint Andrew Press Publishers, Page 143.

consequently, no power or authority to cast out the evil spirit. It wasn't that these men were inexperienced—the problem was that they had no authority—they were not in a relationship with the One who conquered Satan and demons.

Spiritual Warfare

Let me share with you a story that illustrates what faith in God and Christ's death and resurrection can do when young or old, men or women, step out in the authority of God: The following is a true story, not unlike the story in the Bible of Elijah when he challenged the prophets of the false god Baal (1 Kings 18:19-29).

In 1999, three Bushmen from the Kalahari Desert changed history. They were not movers and shakers of society but poor illiterates who laced leather strips to the bottoms of their feet whenever they needed "shoes." However, they stood out from the crowd in three ways:

- They knew God, and they knew how to move His hand to convince Him to transform Africa.
- Through conversations with readers and researchers, they had discovered how Africa had come to be known as the *Dark Continent*, the home of the poorest nations on earth.
- Thinking in sync with the Spirit of God, they determined that the continent had had enough of misery, and it was high time to take a stand and reverse the curse.

Indeed, it was curses that lay at the root of the problem. Archeologists and anthropologists have lately pieced together—through ancient pottery shards, cave art, etc.—a coherent picture of how Africa was settled and encultured. The original settlers came down very slowly from the North through the Rift Valley, a geological crack from the Dead Sea down toward South Africa. Wherever they set up communities, they made pacts with the local gods—actually demons—putting themselves under the thumb of these evil powers. The results have been massive and ghastly. But the Bushmen knew what to do; they organized a prayer expedition to conduct Spiritual Warfare.

Calling together a team of experienced prayer intercessors, including some Westerners, they journeyed north 5,000 miles for three months, starting in July at Cape Agulhas, the southernmost tip of Africa, and stopping at numerous old sites, mainly along the Rift Valley, to renounce and break the original deals with demons and curses. Every prayer session at every stop was what we call a **power confrontation**. By far, the biggest came in Zimbabwe. After a very long, rough ride in jeeps, the team arrived at Mount Injalele (in-ja-lay-lee) in the Motobo Hills.

Though remote, the region was a popular destination for pilgrims; many were presidents, kings, or tribal chiefs. For many years they had come to Injalele to seek advice and guidance. There, an "oracle" supposedly spoke to them out of a large crack in the side of the mountain. You can safely assume that any advice was of a demonic nature. Over the years, it had become such a busy shrine that the witch doctor network across Southern Africa had built four temples around the edges of the crack. So the team prayed. They

worshipped God. They repented for the sins of the people in worshipping demons. They vociferously decreed the downfall of the evil powers and declared the ownership of the land transferred to the Kingdom of Christ. Then they went to the next stop.

Shortly afterward, God hit and hit hard. *Lightning struck all four* of the temples and entirely incinerated them! As you can imagine, it was all over the region's newspapers and on everyone's lips. Within two days, the most respected witch doctor in Southern Africa arrived to assess the damage and see what could be done to restore the site. Though it was a cloudless day, *he was struck by lightning and killed on the spot*. Then came the storm. You may have seen the damage reports on CNN World News. The most torrential rains in memory lashed a vast region, washing away whole villages and especially devastating the occult sites and witchcraft training centers, which were numerous there. But the same storm system in the western areas made the Kalahari blossom like a garden. Where many Christians live there, the land was transformed into a greenhouse of trees, lush grass, blooming plants, flowing streams, and wild game—virtually unseen for at least a century. The locals were awestruck, and the fear of the Lord fell on the whole territory.⁴

I do not advocate doing this ministry of casting out demons without instruction and a team of people to intercede and partner with you. The Scripture is clear that **“these signs shall accompany those who believe. In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well”** (Mark 16:17-18). The Lord did not limit His people in any way—the instruction of what they were to do was given to “those who believe.” The Scriptures teach that this is the inheritance of every child of God, the “children’s bread” (Matthew 15:26). It is part of the covenant that Christ has bought for you at the cross. You can stand up and believe God for a miracle! The Father will instruct us if we ask Him and listen to His guidance and voice.

In the same way, as my father used to stand beside me to help me steer the boat, God is ready to direct us as we step out in His authority. The Lord Jesus longs for you to trust Him like a child and allow His power to flow through you. Expect Him to do it! Faith is expecting what God is willing to give! God is ready to move and work through you.

Prayer: Father, increase our faith and lead us step by step into all that You have prepared for us. Grant that your power and authority will flow through us. Teach us to be Your representatives on earth and bring Your presence to those around us.

Keith Thomas

Email: keiththomas@groupbiblestudy.com

Website: www.groupbiblestudy.com

⁴ Taken from the book “Megashift” written by James Rutz, Published by Empowerment Press, Pages 56-57.