

What is the Government of God in the Church? IV Purpose and Authority of the Ministry

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Last time we were studying in Ezekiel 34, so let's turn there, let's review a little bit of it, because in order to understand what is the right way, we also have to understand why God does not want certain things within His Church. What is so important in it is that God wants *His* authority within the Church—not man's presumed authority in place of God's. And that when we get to the ministry a little later we're going to see that the ministry are to be stewards for God; which means that whatever is done must be done God's way for the benefit of the people whom God has called, and for the benefit of God.

Since God has chosen to use men, there is also the problem of misplaced free choice and the wrong form of authority or government within the Church to suit those men who are the leaders of the Church rather than serve the brethren and feed the flock. In part three of this series we covered the most important thing concerning the stewardship; it's right there in John 21 to Peter: 'Peter, do you love Me? Feed My Sheep. Peter, do you love Me? Feed My lambs. Peter, do you love Me? Shepherd My flock.' That's what it has to be. The reason God has chosen men to do it is because God is not going to be here on the earth personally taking care of it. Even when the Kingdom of God is on earth, who is He going to use? He's going to use those who have been resurrected in the *first* resurrection, and they are going to help bring people into the Kingdom of God and give them eternal life.

What we need to understand is that God does not want men ruling by their means. There are two faults involved in the wrong kind of government within the Church. It has to be Godly government, as He has designated, for the Church:

1. there's the fault of the leaders or minister/pastors
2. there is the fault of the brethren

The brethren like to accuse the ministers, and the ministers like to accuse the brethren. Instead of going to God's Word and finding out what needs to be, and what needs to be done, and repent and seek to do what is right—God will lead them and direct them in what is right—they *rather go to their own devices*. This is a cycle of human behavior all the way through the Old and even into the New Testament.

When troubles come, Jeremiah 5:18: "But even in those days'... [when you're having troubles

and difficulties] ...says the LORD, 'I will not make a complete end with you.'" That's concerning, in this particular case, Judah; the same thing applies, in principle, to everything: a nation, a family, a community, a church. We've also seen how the Church of God has been scattered. How the Church of God, because of sin, has been corrected—and *God is doing it!* Really, when you look at the Church of God today, and you stop and think, we've been given a responsibility for preaching the Gospel to the world, and look at us! It's basically because people have lost their way; they have turned their backs on God, not completely, but enough so that they become lukewarm. They institute—as we have seen out of Rev. 2 & 3—the types of government that comes from men. So, here He summarizes it.

Verse 19: "And it will be, when they shall ask, 'Why does the LORD our God do all these *things* to us?'" General principle:

- that applies to a person
- that applies to a church
- that applies to a nation

"...Then you shall answer them, just as you have forsaken Me..." (v 19). A lot of people say, 'Where have we forsake You?'

- in loving God
- obeying God
- stealing tithes
- wrong government

We are the Church of God and we bear the name of God, not only for identification as to who we are, but then a the sense to the world. The world wants to know what is going on? why are these things happening? They look at the Churches of God and look at this one and they say, 'How can that be a Church of God?' And they look at this other one and say, 'How can that be a Church of God?'

"...you have forsaken Me and served strange gods..." (v 19). What are the gods that people serve? *The things that are around them*: rich and increased with goods; other people; ministers, making idols of them.

God says: "...so you shall serve strangers in a land *that is not yours*.... [we can see this creeping up on us] ...Declare this in the house of Jacob, and cry it in Judah, saying, 'Now hear this, O foolish people and without understanding; who have eyes and see not; who have ears and hear not; Do you not fear Me?' says the LORD..... [everything has to

point back to the Lord] ...‘Will you not tremble at My presence, *even* I Who have placed the sand *for* the boundary of the sea *by* a never-ending decree, so that it cannot pass it? And though they toss themselves, yet, they cannot prevail; though its waves roar, yet they cannot pass over it. But this people has a revolting and a rebellious heart; they have revolted and are departed *from Me*” (vs 19-23).

Unfortunately, even within the Church of God that is true. You look at the Protestants, how they’re going against God. You look at this nation, how they’re going against God. You can’t even count the Catholics because they’re really not Christian anyway, though they use a lot principles out of the Bible to give a façade of Christianity.

Verse 24: “And they do not say in their heart...” That is the key. Not only for the nation but also for the people in the Church of God, and the ministers in the Church of God.

“...‘Let us now fear the LORD our God, Who gives both the former and the latter rain in its season; He reserves to us the appointed weeks of the harvest.’ Your iniquities have turned away these *things*, and your sins have withheld good things from you” (vs 24-25).

We’re seeing them being taken away right now—aren’t we? I noticed, just driving here for church, it’s evident: 40% less traffic than there was last year at this time. ‘Good things taken away.’ How is it taken away? *You pay more for gasoline; you pay more for food; you pay more for everything!* Read Mal. 3; because this nation has turned its back on God; doesn’t keep the laws and commandments of God; and has stolen His tithes. So, every minister who steals tithes, *beware!* God knows!

Verse 26: “For among My people are found wicked ones; they lie in wait, as one who sets snares; they set a trap, they catch men.” We’ve seen that within the Church of God, too; that God had to scatter it because there were infiltrators who came in to take it down, as punishment for all the gross excesses of the church and false doctrine.

Verse 27: “Like a cage full of birds, so their houses are full of deceit; therefore they have become great and grown rich.” When that happens, you don’t understand what’s right and wrong and what you have done that is against God.

Verse 28: “They have become fat, they have become sleek. Yea, they excel in evil deeds; they do not plead the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and they do not defend the right of the needy. Shall I not punish for these *things*?” says the LORD. ‘Shall not My soul be avenged on such a

nation as this? An astounding and horrible thing has happened in the land” (vs 28-30). [

The President is a terrible man! *No! It doesn’t say that!* The politicians are wicked people! *Doesn’t say that!* Those things may be true, but where does it lie? *It lies with those who say that they are representatives of God and they do not represent God!* That can even affect the Church.

Verse 31: “**The prophets prophesy falsely**...” The state of any nation, and the health of any nation, is dependent upon the character of the people. The character of the people must be taught.

Concerning v 28—What is it ‘do defend the right of the needy’? *That is to give them the things that they need to help them at least with the minimum so that they can be able to live and have dignity.* But, in not defending the right of the needy, you have all of these charities, of which many of them are corrupt. Now some of them are good and they do what they need to do. But, look at how every government program increases the needy. It helps them for a while and then it fails. They’re doing it the wrong way because if you have needy, what you need to do is not just keep shoveling it out, shoveling out, shoveling out. You teach them how to live their lives. You teach them how they can be successful. And you promote marriage between fathers and mothers; because God blesses the family unit. He does not bless the kind of family units that we have today: without a father and mother; or maybe they have two mothers and two fathers in this sodomite society in which we live.

This becomes all things. He’s talking here to the prophets, v 30: “An astounding and horrible thing has happened in the land. **The prophets prophesy falsely**...” (vs 30-31). You know exactly what that means; and it gets worse the more falsity that you have the more that is added.

“...and the priests bear rule by **their** means...” (v 31)—rather than God’s way. And you can look at what we covered with Eli and his two sons: Hophni and Phinehas.] (Now, here’s the other half of the fault):

“...and **My people love to have it so**, and what will you do at the end of it?” (v 31). What’s going to be the final result of it? Well, you can just look at the Church and see. The ministers have had it their way, **rather than God’s way**. And we’ve all seen that happen.

Now, let’s come back here to Ezekiel 34 and let’s review this a little bit, and let’s see how God always lays it first at the doorsteps of the prophets and the religious teachers, which they rule by their own means, and God doesn’t like that. God has

given His Word! God has given us choices. We always have to choose God's way in everything that is done.

Ezekiel 34:1: "And the Word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to them, "Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds, '**Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves!**.... [an elite ministry, an elite priesthood, a hierarchical government] ...Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you kill the fat ones, *but* you do not feed the flock'"'" (vs 1-3).

I remember when I came down to Pasadena, when we were transferred down there, and we were at the headquarters of God's Church on earth. And we thought, 'Oh, this is wonderful. Everything's going to be great and marvelous, and it turned out to be a very corrupt proposition indeed!

I remember when we were looking for furniture to put in a house that we rented, that the church rented from the state because of a lawsuit concerning a freeway, so these were called the 'freeway houses.' (They never have built a freeway, by the way, even to this day). The man who was in charge of it, took us to the warehouse and we could choose from this and that and the other thing and so forth. Then he took me over to one of the houses of the leading evangelist, right on the plush main street of South Orange Grove, right there in Pasadena, and they were remodeling the house. He said to me, 'Look at these drapes'; ten-foot ceilings for floor to ceiling drapes. Now mind you, this was back in 1972. He says, 'Guess how much that cost?' \$40,000!

Then you multiply it by how many evangelists there are, and they provided the housing, they provided the furniture, they provided everything for them, plus give them salaries into the six figures. And he said, 'Guess what pays for them?' *Third tithe!* Which was supposed to go for the widows.

I said to myself, I'm pastoring these two churches down here in L.A. and there are a lot of needs and poor people, and they've given me a checkbook to write checks for them to give them assistance.

Every dollar I give to them is a dollar they cannot spend doing this. So, I took care of them as well as possible, because that's what was happening! It put them in an elite, top-down rulership. And yet, some people say, 'Why can't the Church get back to the good ole days.' Well, you need to understand, the 'good old days' were the *corrupt old days*; and the 'good ole days' were those where there was

lying and cheating and stealing and things like that, and later comes *false doctrine!*

God is pointing out: *they are to feed the flock!* To 'feed the flock' means

- with the Word of God
- with the Truth of God
- with the Spirit of God

Verse 4: "You have not made the weak strong, nor have you healed the sick, nor have you bound up the broken. You have not brought again those that were driven away, nor have you sought that which was lost; but you **have ruled them with force and with cruelty.** And they were scattered for lack of a shepherd. And they became food to all the beasts of the field when they were scattered" (vs 4-5). I know this applies to the nation of Israel; but *it also applies to the Church of God* because we are spiritual Israel, too. Haven't we all asked ourselves: 'I remember so and so, I wonder what happened to them?' As one man told me back in Tennessee. 'We used to have three thousand brethren in six congregations, and now nothing!' Where did they go?

It all goes back to *what is the government in the Church of God?* Because if you have that correct then everything else flows from that; because:

- you have connection with God
 - you have inspiration of God
 - you have leading of the Holy Spirit
 - you have compassion and love and mercy
- all of those things are there.

Verse 6: "My sheep wandered through all the mountains and upon every high hill. Yea, My flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none searched nor sought for them." Now, are the brethren around the world, do we have brethren who are still searching? *Yes, we do!*

Verse 7: "Therefore, you shepherds, hear the Word of the LORD." Everyone who wants to exalt himself. Every minister who wants to be a big, ruling king, *please listen up*, because this is what's going to judge you. This is what is going to judge all of us. As we will see, 'judgment comes upon the house of God, *first*'; then upon the world. Just like in the Old Testament, judgment came upon Israel and Judah first, then the rest of the world—same principle. God always corrects His own people first because they know better.

So he says, "...hear the Word of the LORD, 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food to every beast of the field because *there was* no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search *for* My

flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock” (vs 7-8). Then when it was contrary to them, they disfellowshipped them—some ministers even bragging today that they had *disfellowshipped*—because of contrary thoughts and asking simple questions about things—*many brethren!* Where do they go? What are their lives? Well, *God is not going to abandon them!*

Verse 9: “Therefore, O shepherds, hear the Word of the LORD.... [said it twice] ...‘Behold, I *am* against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock....” (vs 9-10). So, if you’re going to a church where you’re not being fed, that’s part of the penalty. And if you stay there and you eat all the rotten fodder and things that they feed you, then that becomes your problem as well.

So, He says: “...Nor shall the shepherds feed themselves any more...” (v 10). They’re going to be out of a job. A lot of the hirelings stay there in the corporate churches so they can be paid! Yes, indeed!

“...for I will deliver My flock from their mouth that they may not be food for them.’ For thus says the Lord GOD, ‘**Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out**’” (vs 10-11). That’s why we have one very important sermon for everyone for everyone who finds themselves as lost from the flock: *Remember, When All Else Fails, God Loves You!*

Verse 12: “As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his scattered sheep, so I will seek out My sheep and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.” Even though applies to the nation of Israel, have you ever come to church when the atmosphere was a cloudy and dark day? *Yes, indeed, we’ve all experienced that.*

Verse 13: “And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land and feed them on the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the places of the land where people live.” That’s applying to the physical nation of Israel, but we can apply it spiritually to the Church.

Verse 14: “I will feed them in a good pasture, and their fold shall be upon the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie in a good fold, and *in* a fat pasture they shall feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down... [and that means *peace of mind*] ...I will seek that which was lost, and bring again those that were driven away, and will bind up the broken, and will strengthen the sick. But I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with

judgment. And you, My flock, thus says the Lord GOD...” (vs 14-17). He’s talking to the flock, because there are problems, also, with the flock. So, we’ve covered the problems with the shepherd.

Now let’s cover the problem with the flock or the brethren, “...‘Behold, I judge between lamb and lamb, *between* rams and he-goats. Is it a small thing for you to have eaten up the good pasture, but must you trample the rest of your pastures with your feet? And to have drunk of the clear waters, but must you foul the rest of it with your feet?’” (vs 17-18).

We have a lot of brethren who *love to have a hierarchy. They love to be part of that corporate system of hirelings*; because it gives them benefits. Also, it puts them in the wrong position. The corporate government and hierarchy wants all the brethren to be dependent upon the minister for everything. The ministers do not teach the people how to live their lives, how to love God, how to overcome sin independently of counseling with the ministry. Because if they did that, they might find themselves out of a job. So, the flock has some problems with it.

Verse 19: “And My flock, they eat *what* your feet have trampled, and they drink *what* your feet have fouled.’... [that’s telling you about bad church experience] ...Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them, ‘Behold I Myself will even judge between the fat lamb and the lean lamb. Because you have thrust with side and with shoulder, and with your horns have pushed all the weak until you have scattered them abroad, Therefore **I will save My flock**, and they shall no more be a prey. And I will judge between lamb and lamb. And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, My servant David....” (vs 19-23).

Who sits in that position today? *Jesus Christ, the son of David!* In the Millennium, of course, that’s going to happen. So, we have parallels in all of these things. And it’s important for us to understand and realize how these things occur.

Let’s see how God holds the prophets responsible. These are prophets *rule by their own means, rather than God’s!* We’re covering these things before we come to the things we need to cover. What should a minister or elder do? How should he govern a church? Let’s see the things that should not be first.

Ezekiel 13:1: “And the Word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy. And say to those who prophesy out of their own hearts, “Hear the Word of the LORD: Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing! O Israel, your prophets

are like the foxes in the ruins. You have not gone up into the breach, nor built the wall for the house of Israel, that it might stand in the battle in the day of the LORD. They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, “The LORD says.” And the LORD has not sent them; but they hoped to confirm *their word*....” (vs 1-6).

In other words, they’re going to God with their own words, saying, ‘Well, God, You’ve got to make this right.’ I think if you use that as kind of a formula to watch the religious channels and the Protestant ministers, I think you would see that that is certainly true.

Some books were being sold by Dr. Kennedy, who is one of the Sunday Protestant, religious preachers out of Florida, and he was giving a good discount on *The Marketing of Evil* by David Kupelian. I got on their list and I get a letter every month; and right on the outside of it, it says, ‘from the heart of the pastor.’ I look at that and I think, what we really want are the things *from the heart of God!* not the heart of the pastor.

Verse 7: “Did you not see a vain vision, and speak a lying divination? When you say, “The LORD says”; although I have not spoken.’ Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Because you have spoken vanity and seen lies, therefore, behold, I *am* against you,’ says the Lord GOD. ‘And My hand shall be against the prophets who see vanity and who divine a lie. They shall not be in the assembly of My people... [read Psa. 1 about the wicked] ...nor shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I *am* the Lord GOD. Because, even because they have seduced My people, saying, “Peace”; and *there was* no peace—and when anyone builds a weak wall they cover it with whitewash... [it’s all going to fall] ...Say to those who cover it with whitewash, that it shall fall; *there* will be a flooding rain; and you, O great hailstones, shall fall, and a stormy wind will break forth” (vs 7-11). You can read the rest of it.

Jeremiah 23, same thing. All the way through the Old Testament, we find that God indicts the shepherds. There’s a reason why He does. How the people are spiritually is the most important thing, because unless those who teach from the Word of God:

- teach them the Word of God
- teach them character
- teach them love
- teach them how to live their life
- teach them how to have a relationship with God

—all of that is important; because that establishes in a nation and in a church the character of the people.

Jeremiah 23:1—this gets pretty strong here, it’s really some chapter: “Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture,’ says the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD, God of Israel, against the shepherds who feed My people, ‘You have scattered My flock, and have driven them away, and have not taken care of them. Behold, I will bring upon you the evil of your doings,’ says the LORD. ‘But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and will bring them again to their fold. And they shall be fruitful and multiply” (vs 1-3). Then it talks about Israel and re-establishing David and so forth.

Jeremiah says, v 9: “As for the prophets my heart within me is broken...” Jeremiah really had it tough, and he was at the end of how Judah was rebelling against God, and ready to go into captivity. He knew the reasons for it. He understood what was going to happen.

“...all my bones shake. I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine has overcome because of the LORD and because of the words of His Holiness.... [he looks out at the land]: ...For the land is full of adulterers.... [Isn’t that true today? This nation is obsessed—if not possessed—of sex, of all kinds.] ...Because of swearing the land mourns; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and they *wield* power unjustly” (vs 9-10).

Isn’t that something? Here in California we have *fires, fires, everywhere!* You think it’s a coincidence that these took place after the Supreme Court of California sanctified homosexual marriages? Among other things!

“...and they *wield* power unjustly. ‘For both prophet and priest are ungodly...” (vs 10-11). If you don’t teach God’s way, you’re ungodly. If you take part of God’s way and teach that, you’re stealing His words while you cast His law behind you. God won’t tolerate that either.

It’s like one minister said, ‘Well, why don’t you preach the Truth on radio and television?’ He says. ‘They won’t let me, but I’ll preach as much as I can.’ That’s not what God says!

“...‘yea, in My house I have found their evil,’ says the LORD. ‘So, their way shall be to them as slippery *ways* in the darkness; they shall be driven on, and fall in *their way*; for I will bring evil on them, even the year of their judgment,’ says the LORD” (vs 11-12). He goes on and shows how absolutely terrible things are. And then he summarizes it by say this:

Verse 23: “*Am I a God Who is near,*’ says the LORD, ‘and not a God afar off?... [He’s always at hand] ...Can anyone hide himself in secret places so that I shall not see him?’ says the LORD. ‘Do I not fill the heavens and earth?’ says the LORD.... [With His Spirit? With His power? And the universe with stars and galaxies? *Yes!*] ...‘I have heard what the prophets said, who prophesy lies in My name, saying, “I have dreamed, I have dreamed”’” (vs 23-25). We can see that in the Church of God today, too—can’t we? *Yes!*

Verse 26: “How long shall *this* be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies and who are prophets of the deceit of their own heart? They scheme to cause My people to forget My name by their dreams which they tell...” (vs 26-27). Not only that, but by having them look to a man instead of God; and by saying that this man—who we deemed to be an apostle—‘we only follow the 18 things that he taught and restored.’ Well what have they done with the man? *Made him an idol!* If you don’t follow Jesus Christ, and if you don’t follow what He teaches, all bets are off.

Here’s the admonition; He unloads on them, v 28: “The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream. And he who has My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully....” [t better be *God’s way*, the way that God shows it has to be—***faithfully!***]

- not serve the self
- not to exalt the self
- not for vanity or profit

but to serve

“...What *is* the chaff to the wheat?’ says the LORD. ‘*Is* not My Word like a fire?’ says the LORD; ‘and like a hammer *that* breaks the rock in pieces? Therefore, behold, I *am* against the prophets who steal My words each one from his neighbor. Behold, I *am* against the prophets who use their tongues and say, “He says,” *when I did not say*. Behold, I *am* against those who prophesy false dreams and tell them, and cause My people to go astray by their lies and by their wantonness...” (vs 28-32).

We’ve recently had one man who said, ‘My wife and I are the two witnesses. We’re over here in Jerusalem.’ They didn’t call fire down from heaven. Not one thing he said came to pass. He said, ‘Well, if it doesn’t happen by such and such a date, I will declare myself a false prophet.’ Well, we’ll wait and see. He just recently had another vision. ‘All is okay, folks. Everything that I said before was wrong, but I’m right with God.’ ***Not so!***

“...Yet I did not send them nor command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at

all,’ says the LORD” (v 32). What do you say after you have said, ‘My wife and I are the two witnesses, and all of these disasters are going to come because I proclaim they’re going to come’—and they don’t come?

And yet, God talked about ‘the soup that fouled the church’—they still follow him. Do yourself a favor and save yourself problems with God and repent and say ‘I’m a false prophet, everybody leave me.’ And all of those of you who followed him, say, ‘We’re foolish and stupid to believe this man and follow him’ and repent and return to God.

Notice what will happen, v 33: “And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask you, saying, “What *is* the oracle of the LORD?” You shall then say to them, “What oracle?” I will even forsake you,’ says the LORD. ‘And *as for* the prophet, and the priest, and the people, who shall say, “The oracle of the LORD,” I will even punish that man and his house” (vs 32-34).

Verse 35: “Thus you shall say each one to his neighbor, and each one to his brother, ‘What has the LORD answered? And what has the LORD spoken?’ And you shall mention the oracle of the LORD no more. For every man’s word becomes his *own* oracle; for you have perverted the words of the living God, of the LORD of hosts our God. Thus you shall say to the prophet, ‘What has the LORD answered you? And what has the LORD spoken?’ But since you say, ‘The oracle of the LORD,’ therefore thus says the LORD, ‘Because you say this word, “The oracle of the LORD”—after I have sent to you saying, “You shall not say, ‘The oracle of the LORD’”—Therefore, behold, I, even I, will completely forget you, and I will forsake you and the city that I gave to you and your fathers, *and cast you* out of My presence. And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten” (vs 35-40).

Those are pretty heavy words. Hasn’t quite happened to that degree in the Church, yet; but since this is directed to the prophets of Judah as well, did it happen to the Jews in 586 B.C.? *Yes!* Had they become a perpetual shame wherever they go? *Yes!* Did it happen again in 70 A.D.? They didn’t learn the lesson when Christ came and spoke to them personally.

Now, let’s understand something, brethren. I know these are hard and tough words. Maybe you think, there goes Fred again, he’s jumping on them again. But, brethren, I want you to understand that the state the Church is in a really terrible mess.

- unless there’s repentance—beginning with the ministers, all the egotistical vain ones, who have all their power and control

- unless there's repentance of the brethren who follow them

God is going to continue to scatter and separate and divide and no one's going to know which end is up unless they return to God. Because if God did this to Judah, which He did—it's a historical fact—what do you think He's going to do to His Church?

(go to the next track)

We've already covered that Christ is the Head of the Church; He has direct authority over all the brethren, and that's where the authority lies with the brethren. Since He's chosen men to teach, He has authority over all of those that He calls into the ministry. It does not elevate them to a separate higher authority over the brethren in a hierarchical sense. So, let's look at the overall perspective.

Ephesians 1:19 is talking about the "...inner working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from *the* dead, and set *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above every principality and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named—not only in this age, but also in the *age* to come; for He has subordinated all things under His feet, and has given Him *to be* head over all things to the Church, which is His body—the fullness of Him Who fills all things in all" (vs 19-23). ***Christ is the undisputed Head; He has full authority; all authority in heaven and earth!***

Now let's see the authority that He has given to the ministry and for what purpose. It is not for the purpose of power and control, wealth or money, or any of those things; ***it is to teach people the way of eternal life!***

Ephesians 4:9: "Now, He Who ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?... [Christ being put in the grave and then resurrected] ...He Who descended is the same one Who also ascended above all the heavens so that He might fulfill all things" (vs 9-10). Here is how it reflects directly to the Church, the teachings in the Church, the functions of the ministry and so forth.

Verse 11: "And He gave some as apostles..." An apostle means *one sent bearing the authority of Jesus Christ to witness of His resurrection*. That's what He told the disciples back there in Luke 24 and also Acts 1. They are to be witnesses of these things unto the ends of the earth.

Let's stop here and ask: All the original apostles died; what do we have to help witness to the ends of the earth? *The Word of God!* So, their ministry is still going on through those who are doing the teaching today; because we teach from the

Word of God and we teach what the apostles have written, what God inspired them to write, being the God-breathed Word of God.

"...He gave some as apostles..." (v 11)—and ***that is a function***, as we will see later, it is not an office. There are no perpetual offices. Once you have been elevated to an office you are in that office forever—which happens with a hierarchical church, whether it be the Catholic Church, Protestant Church or Church of God.

If you're a priest, then you're elevated to be a bishop, then you're a bishop the rest of your life; and if you're elevated to be an archbishop—and each time there's an ordination going along the line. Then if you're elevated to be a Cardinal, now you're in the super-elite, the princes of the Catholic Church, and you help choose the pope—and he stays in that office until he dies; likewise, being a Cardinal and so forth.

God's way has nothing to do with that. What are being described here are functions performed by elders; because we will see Peter said, 'I am also an elder' when he was speaking to the other elders there in 1-Pet. 5.

"...and some prophets..." (v 11)—and a prophet means *to give inspired preaching*. If you are telling forth the Word of God correctly, and the time comes to prophesy to foretell what is going to happen, based upon the Word of God, then you are prophesying.

"...and some evangelists..." (v 11)—and evangelists are like those we saw where Jesus sent the twelve apostles out on an evangelistic tour and the 70 on an evangelistic tour to reach new people.

"...and some, pastors..." (v 11)—and pastors are to feed the flock, as we read back there in Jer. 23, Ezek. 34 and Ezek. 13.

"...and teachers" (v 11)—to teach.

Now, here's the reason: not to exalt anyone in these offices, as it has been claimed. Then it comes along, 'I am the presiding so-and-so and I was next to the apostle, and therefore, I have more authority.' *Not so! Not so!* It's not based upon authority. It's based upon love and serving the brethren and feeding the flock for a purpose that God has designed.

Here it is, v 12: "**For the perfecting of the saints...**" God's way!

- with His Word
- with His Spirit
- with His righteousness
- with His love

- with His mercy
 - with His grace
- not the ideas of men*

“...for *the* work of *the* ministry... [and there is a lot of work that goes with it.] (For what purpose?): ...for *the* edifying... [the up-building] ...of the body of Christ” (v 12).

- if you teach them the right way
- if you teach them with God’s Spirit
- if you teach them with the love of God
- if you teach them to love God and love each other
- if you inspire them to desire to do the will of God

they will do it. But there is another very important factor that is true. Unless the one who is teaching is also ***doing what he is teaching***, he will never be able to perfect the flock, because there are degrees of hypocrisy mixed in with it, and vanity and self-serving mixed in with it.

“...for the edifying of the body of Christ” (v 12). That means to *build it up!* The word for ‘edification’ also is a root word for *steward*. Very important! This is so:

- they can have the character of God
- they can have the love of God
- they can have they can have the faith of God
- they can have looking forward to eternal life
- they can be able to withstand the trials and difficulties
 - ✓ to help them in prayer and study
 - ✓ to help them in anointing, in healing
 - ✓ to help them in counseling
 - ✓ to teach them to be able to have a personal relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ; that’s the most important thing! That’s why we’re here.

Anyone who is to be a minister, has to have these priorities. Everyone who’s a minister or elder—whether they are serving in the function of an apostle or prophet or evangelist or pastor or teacher—***the goal is to perfect the saints***. The only way they can do it is by these five things.

1. They must love God the Father and Jesus Christ first and foremost, above everything, as Jesus told Peter.
2. They must love the Truth and adhere to the Truth; always preach and believe the Truth.
3. They must yield to the Holy Spirit to lead

them.

And that comes *by study, by prayer, by dedication* and that dedication comes because you love God with all your heart, mind, soul and being.

4. your family
5. the brethren

Those are the priorities.

- Loving God
- Always seeking and preaching the Truth and living by it.
- Yielding to the Holy Spirit of God, to be led by the Holy Spirit
- Being the head of your family and taking care of your family.
- The brethren

In that order, And unless you have the first three, you can’t accomplish the second two.

Notice how this is to be, v 13: “**Until we all come into the unity of the faith...** [that is a process] ...and **of the knowledge of the Son of God...**” That is also a process, which comes through what? *A personal relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ*, by the one who’s the elder or teacher and by the brethren that he is teaching.

“...unto a perfect man...” (v 13). How perfect is this to be? This is why, without the right understanding of the purpose of God in the New Testament and the Church, you cannot possibly understand the true Government of God within the Church, because you are going to miss the whole point.

Jesus told what the goal was, Matthew 5:48: “Therefore, you shall be perfect... [***this is the goal, this is what we are doing, this is why we overcome***] ...even as your Father Who *is* in heaven is perfect.” I submit to you:

- you cannot do that without the Spirit of God
- you cannot do that without the love of God
- you cannot do that without the Word of God

God being in each one of us with His Spirit so that the perfection can be accomplished. That’s why we have Sabbath services. Not just as a day to attend church, but a day where we learn to be perfected and learn of eternal life, and where we are inspired and we have hope and we have understanding and we have all the blessings that come from God to be able to then develop Godly character. That’s the whole purpose of it. Self does not count to anything unless self in the teachers and the brethren is completely subordinated to the will and power of God—in love and service and all of that together.

Ephesians 4:13—“...unto a perfect man, **unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...**” That is the overall job description and process that sets the goal, that sets the parameters, that gives us the understanding of what we need to do. There are qualifications which apply and methods of teaching which need to be followed; and all of that Paul wrote for the instruction for Timothy.

So we'll pick it up next time at that point.

Scriptural references:

- 1) Jeremiah 5:18-31
- 2) Ezekiel 34:1-23
- 3) Ezekiel 13:1-11
- 4) Jeremiah 23:1-3, 9-12, 23-40
- 5) Ephesians 1:19-23
- 6) Ephesians 4:9-13
- 7) Matthew 5:48
- 8) Ephesians 4:13

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- John 21
- Rev. 2; 3
- Malachi 3
- Psalm 1
- Luke 24
- Acts 1

Also referenced:

- Sermon: *When All Else Fails, Remember God Loves You*
- Book: *Marketing of Evil* by David Kupelian

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