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LEADERSHIP

Since Jesus is the Head of His Church and the ultimate authority, don't you think it would be wise to see not only what He had to say about leadership, but also how He lived His life?

Leadership in God's assembly works backward from the world. If you want to lead, then you will seek a humble place. Jesus could not have been more clear on this issue; but apparently, **not clear enough for some people:**

"You know that the rulers of the nations lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."
Matthew 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-44; Luke 22:24-27.

Any valid theory about leadership in the congregation must be in alignment with the clear statements of Jesus Christ that there are no positions of authority (Matthew 20:25-28, Mark 10:42-44, Luke 22:24-27), seats of honor (Matthew 23:5-7, Luke 14:7-11, 20:46), or religious titles (Matthew 23:8-10) in His assembly. When a Greek word could be interpreted to have two different meanings, then the meaning that confirms the clear teachings of the rest of Scripture must be chosen. There are many Greek words that could have been used to indicate mandatory obedience or authoritarian rule to support the notion of "*church positions and rule*", but none of those Greek words are EVER used to indicate positional authority among Christians. If you think that Scripture allows positions of authority "*in the church*", then you are the one who has a contradiction on your hands.

In the end, you may not like what the Scripture says, but are you willing to obey it? This is where "*the rubber meets the road*" for many professing Christians. Are you a

bondsman of Christ Jesus? Are you willing to follow the Lord and His will in the Scriptures alone, even when you don't like it? Isn't God's Truth more important and loyalty to that Truth more important than loyalty to traditions, the commandments of men, or your local church?

To be clear, in the scriptures cited above, Jesus is not saying that *positional authority* is not a valid authority structure, but only that it is not to be used in His Church. **"It is not so among you"** applies to all Christians! But because those who DO hold positions and offices in "institutional churches" often have trouble reading plain English, let's look at these verses again and understand what Jesus is forbidding.

First, the phrase "exercise lordship over" is translated from the Greek term "kurieuo" #2961 or #2634 katakurieuo; from G2596 and G2961; to lord against, that is, control, subjugate; which both come from the root word "kurios" #2962 meaning "lord" or "master"; supreme in authority, that is, a controller.

A "lord" is someone who holds a position of authority over another person. It should be quite obvious that men are forbidden to have positions as lords in the church because only Jesus is Lord! Jesus said, "You call Me Teacher and Lord and you are right, for I am!" (John 13:13). Jesus alone "exercises lordship over" His Church. Some local institutional church leaders mask or **cover up** their lordship by using the terms, "caring for your souls" or "guarding the flock." Others have actually tried to defend their lordship based on a liberal translation of the Bible that has poorly translated these words as "lord it over."

In this case, an obscure **"it"** has been inserted into the text which they interpret to merely forbid tyranny. In other words, they maintain that they can still be lords over others just as long as they are not flaunting "i-t". Their false doctrine hinges on this single word "it", since the word "it" is not in any Greek text!

The Greek terms (katakurieuo) and (kurieuo) do not have the word **"it"** hiding somewhere inside of them. These words do not carry the meaning of being puffed up, self-absorbed, officious, demanding, or magisterial, nor are they used this way in any other verse in Scripture. Christians are not allowed to "exercise lordship over" others in any manner, period! Covering it up; masking it; changing the terminology around to hide your true intentions, will not absolve you.

Jesus was not simply condemning leaders who were flaunting their "positions" or so-called offices; He was condemning the use of "positions" and "offices" themselves!

And, in case there was ever any doubt, the intention of Jesus' command was also clearly echoed by both Paul, "Not that we are lords over your faith, but fellow workers with you in your joy." (2 Corinthians 1:24) and Peter, "Not exercising lordship over the heritage, but becoming examples to the flock." (1 Peter 5:3).

Both of these verses again use the exact same Greek words.

Second, the phrase "exercise authority over" is translated from the Greek term #1850 or #2715 (katexousiazo) which both come from the root word #1849 (exousia) which is the word for authority.

Just as with the previous phrase, Jesus announces that men are not allowed to exercise any authority over others. Once again there is no overbearing connotation in these words, and this time none of the liberal translations have chosen to insert an imaginary "it". In fact, this word for authority is never used anywhere in Scripture to indicate that one Christian has positional authority over another Christian. Of course, this is to be expected since Jesus had clearly prohibited the use of positions of authority in His Church!

Last of all, look at the context.

Jesus' command is made entirely clear by the context. He contrasts the phrases "*exercise lordship over*" and "*exercise authority over*" with the concepts of being a "servant" or "slave".

Do some people need to be informed that being a "servant" or "slave" is not normally thought of as a position over others? By the look of things, yes, many "*in the church*" DO need to be informed. But do they have ears to hear? That's the other question. And the clear answer is NO, they don't.

Is this not a sure sign of arrogance and ignorance all rolled into one? *Church leaders* governing and ruling in their man-made local organizations can't even bear to listen to the Truth, much less try to answer it. The Scriptures don't even enter one ear and leave the other. They DO NOT HEAR. **Servants and slaves do not govern and rule over; they serve under!**

"If anyone wants to be first, he will be last of all and servant of all." (Mark 9:35; Matthew 23:11-12).

This is completely upside down and backwards to the way positional authority works in the world. Jesus condemned the use of positions in His Church again later when He said: *"But you are not to be called 'Rabbi', for only one is your Teacher and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth your 'Father', for only one is your Father and He is in Heaven. Nor are you to be called 'Master', for only one is your Master, the Christ."* (Matthew 23:8-10).

Read those words again. Just as in keeping with His previous statements, here, Jesus is condemning the use of any such religious title. Jesus, in these few sentences, is

making it very plain what the nature and quality of leadership in His community was going to be. His leaders would NOT assume titles or positions.

Any man who claims to hold a position of authority *in the church*; any man who claims that *"he is clothed with the authority of Christ"*; any man who claims *"ministerial dignity"* or that he *"occupies a sacred office"* **is a fraud and directly contradicts the teachings of Jesus Christ!**

To those of you who are now scrambling to try to think of some argument to the contrary: Will you submit to the authority of Jesus' teaching in the Scriptures? The Church is to receive its concept of authority and leadership from the teachings of Jesus, not from the institutional concepts of the world; and neither from *"your church fathers"* or your current seminary teachings!

"The last shall be first and the first shall be last." Matthew 20:16,19:30; Mark 9:35,10:31; Luke 13:30

"Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted." Matthew 23:12, 18:4; Luke 14:11,18:14

"...For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." Luke 16:15

When it comes to the kingdom of God and issues related to His assembly, things are upside-down from the world.

If you want to live, then you must die (John 12:24).

If you seek to save your life, then you will lose it (Matthew 10:39).

If you give, then you will receive (Luke 6:38).

If you are weak, then you are strong (2 Corinthians 12:10).

If you are poor, then you are rich (James 2:5).

If you want to be wise, then you must become a fool (1Corinthians 3:18-19)

Jesus created a totally new concept of leading by serving people instead of wielding positions of authority over them.

But instead, what do we see in today's local institutional churches? How do they operate and function? They operate and function in a totally opposite direction to what Jesus had to say about leadership!

What an affront! What an egregious display of arrogance!

Contrary to the hierarchical structures of *"local institutional churches"*, this is what Jesus had to say about leadership. Imagine that!

But wait a minute. Did He forget to instruct His disciples about all the ecclesiastical positions and who had to submit to whom? Did He forget about "The Pastoral Office," or "The Sacred Position?" How about "Ministerial Dignity" or "Being clothed with divine authority?"

What about elections, terms of appointment, installation services, and seminary training? Jesus did not forget these things. **Jesus was not interested in these things!** True leaders in His assembly have always been able to operate just fine without holding any such positions or offices or titles forbidden by Jesus.

Again, how utterly ironic that the teaching and practice in today's local institutional church on authority and leadership is exactly the type of leadership style Christ specifically warned His disciples not to practice!

"It shall not be so among you," He said directly to His disciples. If there is a direct command in the Scriptures, this is one of them. The apostles followed this command. Their leadership was one by example and inspired teaching, not by dictate.

Why did Jesus emphasize that the great in His kingdom must not be at the top of the pyramid, but at the very bottom, as servants of all? The answer is that you do not command from the bottom. You do not make decisions which are binding on others when you are at the bottom. You cannot throw your weight around; bark out phrases as "pastoral authority," or demand submission to some fabled "office" when you are at the bottom.

And so again, today's local institutional church and its leaders have rejected, both the command and example of Jesus, and have done just the opposite in putting themselves on par with the elite, at the peak of the pyramid! The same is true with the Apostle Paul. In today's local institutional churches, the Apostle Paul's practice and application is an example to be avoided as well! It has all been replaced with the official ruling office of the pastor/elder.

They do bind their will upon others. They do issue commands. They do demand unquestioning obedience to their will. They not only rule, they rule as absolute monarchs. Their decisions are not subject to review by anybody. They do not submit themselves to the many. They require the many to subject themselves to them!

If you truly follow the Lord, then you will be serving others, not commanding them. No one who understands and follows Jesus' example would ever hold a position over another Christian. A true leader would never try to rule over you, but will get under you to "build you up" (2 Corinthians 10:8, 13:10). The very purpose of leadership is "to equip the saints for the work of service to build up the Body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12).

Jesus was the greatest leader because Jesus was the greatest servant. "If I then, the Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. For

I have given you an example in order that you should do as I have done to you." John 13:14-15).

Jesus taught His disciples to be leaders by serving others, not by obtaining positions of authority. And guess what? The disciples followed Jesus' example and served the brethren by waiting on tables almost to the point of neglecting their other duties (Acts 6:1-6). Most people do not view washing feet or waiting on tables as positions of authority! Christians are commanded to *"serve one another"* (Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 4:10), just as Jesus set an example of serving throughout His life.

Leaders in the church lead by following Christ's example and His example is the most powerful argument against the idea of an official ruling clergy. Did He model one thing, only to build another? Did He come serving, only to elevate His people's status later down the road?

As has been said before, it is the *"spirit of antichrist"* which speaks, not only of anything that replaces Christ, but also who practices things which He explicitly forbade! Christ's likeness in a thing determines its legitimacy. Does it reflect Him in what He has said or not? If not, it is none of His. It is NOT of His doing. It is NOT of His workmanship. It is NOT reflecting His image or His character. And neither is it His Church!

Behold the anti-Christ in all his glory before men, and shame before God.

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ." Colossians 2:8

Christians need to be on guard and to stand firm because the fiercest opposition they will encounter will come from the very men who say they are *"God's leaders."*

"Stand firm therefore and do not again be entangled with a yoke of slavery."

Because of your stance, these so-called *"leaders"* will condemn you in the name of Jesus Christ, the very Author of this freedom, hiding under their banner of *"pastoral authority"* and *"defending the truth."* What a contradiction against reality!

Any so-called *"church leader"* who occupies these man-made, false offices of authority and teaches others to recognize them in contradiction to the Scriptures, cannot be considered a true leader guided by the Holy Spirit. They are religious hucksters in empty suits. They are the wolves that Jesus earnestly warned us to flee from. From these rebels against the Lord and His Word we must separate ourselves so as to not bring His judgment upon ourselves.

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

2 Corinthians 6:17-18

The question might be asked, "What if someone is presently holding these *"offices and positions of authority"* in the church? What are they to do?"

Well, the clear answer; the straight answer; the right answer will be to do what any other professing Christian will do when they learn and understand that they have been living and doing unbiblical and sinful practices. They must repent!

But will they repent? Sad to say, probably not. As the old adage goes, *"It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it."*

With only the rarest exception, none of these *"church leaders"* can be objective in reading an article like this because it exposes their role as the unbiblical authority figures in an unbiblical church institution that the people look up to, and in many cases, who pay their salary, fringe benefits, and other perks. Many actually earn their living as employees of the unbiblical local church institution and its unbiblical corporate officials. It is easy for them to be self-deceived, actually believing that they are engaged in the service of God and to the glory of God! Such is the astonishing power of deception.

What is the *"church leader"* to do when he finally realizes that his job, the career that he has spent most of his life developing, is entirely unbiblical; when he realizes he is holding a position of authority, without having any true spiritual authority; hoarding a position of power, but never really serving anybody; wielding the title of *"Pastor"* without having any spiritual discernment whatsoever? Perhaps, some *"pastors"* might come to discover that they are not even Christians. But unfortunately, when most *"church leaders"* are confronted with the Scripture, it is rare that even one of them will repent of their unbiblical position. When you confront them in love, many of them will only harden their hearts.

They will continue to posture themselves to *"rule over God's people"* and will refuse to see Christ in this light, or if they do, they will pay the most pathetic, empty lip service imaginable, and then turn around next week and do just the opposite!

We are living in the darkest of days. The Lord's call to *"let this mind be in you"* continually falls upon deaf ears to the majority of those in "leadership positions in the local church."

They possess absolutely nothing of *"the mind of Christ."* Historically, and indeed, as we speak, the institutionalized local church of today has looked nothing like the Serving Christ. The servant's towel has long ago been replaced with a business suit and tie. Many today are above the washing of feet, and instead, will gloat over their so-

called "*Sacred Pastoral Office*" and glorify themselves in their so-called "*Ministerial Dignity*" and "*Eldership rule*" as they teach aspiring students to do so as well.

How far we have fallen from the Divine Example. What are these so-called "*leaders*" to do? Deep in their hearts, they already know what they must do. May the Lord save some mercy for such folks.

Yet, Jesus' teachings on leadership stand true. They are formed from the example of a servant. God's people are recognized as leaders in the assembly by serving others (Romans 16:1-2, 1 Corinthians 16:15-16, Colossians 1:25) and being examples by the way they live (1 Corinthians 11:1, 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9, 1 Peter 5:2-3).

Once most people understand what true leadership in the assembly is all about, they suddenly are not so interested in being a leader.

Many people would never want to lead if they realized they don't get to be the top dog with all the glory, fame, and power. Everybody today wants to be in charge, but nobody wants to "*wait on tables*" (Acts 6:1-6). Serving is no fun to them because they don't get to go strutting around with your chest out. There is no ladder to climb; no executive perks; no handshakes at the door. There is only work to do serving others and building up His church.

Within His Church, there are no hierarchical positions of men – there is only a hierarchy of One – everyone and everything is directly subordinate to Jesus Christ! "*And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over all things for the Church.*" (Ephesians 1:22). There are no managerial positions in the Church, for each Christian is a priest who reports directly to the Head, Jesus Christ (Ezekiel 34:23, John 10:16, 1 Corinthians 11:3). "*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*" (1 Timothy 2:5).

No one in the Church is required to report to any intermediate position, for each person is directly accountable to God and God alone (Matthew 12:36, Romans 14:12, 1 Corinthians 7:24, Hebrews 4:13). In the Scriptures, Christians may have exercised authority over things such as evil spirits and diseases (Matthew 10:1, Mark 3:15, 6:7, Luke 9:1, 10:19), but never over each other.

There is only one position of authority in the Church and it is held exclusively by Jesus Christ.

May the Lord grant us ears to hear the Voice of the True Shepherd.

Ken Cascio

Webmaster @ wickedshepherds.com

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