

Message Eight

**Authority, Rebellion,
the Vindication of Delegated Authority,
and a Proper Representative of God**

Scripture Reading: Num. 12:1-15; 16:1—17:13; 20:2-13, 24; 27:12-14; 2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10

I. God is the supreme authority; He has all authority—Rom. 9:21-22:

- A. God's authority represents God Himself; God's power only represents God's works—Acts 17:24.
- B. God's authority is actually God Himself; authority issues out from God's own being—Rev. 22:1.
- C. All authority—spiritual, positional, and governmental—derives from God—2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10; John 19:10-11; Gen. 9:6.
- D. When we touch God's authority, we touch God Himself—Isa. 6:1-5:
 - 1. Meeting God's authority is the same as meeting God—Amos 4:12.
 - 2. Offending God's authority is the same as offending God Himself.
- E. In our relationship with God, nothing is more important than touching authority—Acts 9:5; Matt. 11:25.
- F. Knowing authority is an inward revelation rather than an outward teaching—Acts 22:6-16.
- G. Only God is the direct authority to man; all other authorities are indirect authorities—delegated authorities, deputy authorities, appointed by God—Dan. 4:32, 34-37:
 - 1. Only when we meet God's authority can we submit to the delegated authority whom God appoints—Matt. 28:18; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:5.
 - 2. God requires that we submit not only to Him but to all delegated authorities—Rom. 13:1-7; 2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10; Heb. 13:17.
 - 3. Those who do not submit to God's indirect authority cannot submit to God's direct authority.
 - 4. God wants us to submit to indirect authority—delegated authorities—so that we may receive spiritual supply.
- H. We all must meet authority, be restricted by God, and be led by His delegated authority—Isa. 37:16; Phil. 2:12; Heb. 13:17.

II. There are two great principles in the universe—God's authority and Satan's rebellion; the unique controversy between God and Satan concerns authority and rebellion—Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13:

- A. Rebellion is the denial of God's authority and the rejection of God's rule:
 - 1. Satan was originally an archangel created by God, but due to his pride he uplifted himself, violated God's sovereignty, rebelled against God, became God's adversary, and established his own kingdom—Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:2-19; Matt. 12:26.
 - 2. When man sinned, he rebelled against God, denied God's authority, and rejected God's rule; at Babel men rebelled collectively against God to abolish God's authority from the earth—Gen. 3:1-6; 11:1-9.
- B. Although Satan rebelled against God's authority and although man violates His authority by rebelling against Him, God will not let this rebellion continue; He will establish His kingdom on the earth—Rev. 11:15.
- C. The center of dispute in the universe relates to who has authority—4:2-3:
 - 1. We must contend with Satan by asserting that authority is with God—Acts 17:24, 30.

2. We need to set ourselves to submit to God's authority and uphold God's authority—Matt. 11:25.

D. The sin of rebellion is more serious than any other kind of sin—1 Sam. 15:23.

III. Chapters 12 and 16 of Numbers speak of rebellion against God's delegated authority:

A. In speaking against Moses, Miriam and Aaron were speaking against the deputy authority of God—12:1-15:

1. God had appointed Moses to be His deputy authority, His representative authority on earth; the authority that Moses represented was the authority of God—Exo. 3:10-18a; 7:1.

2. According to God's governmental administration, Miriam and Aaron should have submitted themselves to Moses, but they rebelled—Num. 12:1-2.

3. Neither Aaron nor Miriam knew authority; instead, they fostered a rebellious heart—vv. 1-2.

4. The words of rebellion ascended upward and were heard by God—v. 2b:

a. When Miriam and Aaron offended Moses, they offended God in Moses; therefore, God became angry.

b. Once a person touches delegated authority, he touches God in that delegated authority.

c. To offend the delegated authority is to offend God—vv. 4-10.

5. Miriam's becoming leprous was God's governmental dealing—v. 10.

B. The rebellion recorded in chapter 16 was a corporate rebellion:

1. The rebellion in this chapter was a widespread, universal rebellion among God's people—v. 19a.

2. Numbers 16:3, 9, and 10 show that the root of this rebellion was ambition, the struggle for power and for a higher position:

a. Ambition undermines God's plan and damages His people.

b. Throughout the centuries many problems among Christians have been caused by ambition—cf. Matt. 20:20-28; 3 John 9-11.

3. Although Moses was humble in falling on his face (Num. 16:4), he did not give up his God-given position as God's deputy authority (vv. 5-11, 16-18):

a. Moses did not fight back; rather, he brought the rebels and the ones against whom they rebelled to God—v. 5.

b. As God's deputy, or delegated, authority, Moses referred this case to God as the highest authority, for His speaking, exposing, and judging—vv. 6-35.

c. In a struggle for power, the only One who can judge and expose the real situation is God Himself—vv. 30-33.

4. The murmuring of the people against Moses and Aaron proves that their rebellious nature had not been subdued—v. 41.

IV. Numbers 16 speaks of man's rebellion against God's deputy authority and how man opposed God's deputy authority; chapter 17 speaks of God's vindication of His appointed authority:

A. God vindicated to everyone that deputy authority is according to His appointment—v. 5.

B. Since the rebellion of Korah and his company was related to the priesthood (16:3, 8-10), the budding of Aaron's rod was a vindication indicating that Aaron was the one accepted by God as having authority in the God-given ministry of the priesthood (17:2-10).

C. The budding rod of Aaron typifies the resurrected Christ—the budding, blossoming, and fruit-bearing Christ—who imparts life to others—v. 8:

1. Christ, the greatest budding rod in the universe, imparts life to others; He always flows out life to enliven others—John 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:3.
 2. Today Christ is still budding, and we are the fruit, the almonds, of His budding.
- D. In typology a rod signifies authority—cf. 1 Cor. 4:21:
1. In Numbers 17 the rods represented the leaders of the twelve tribes (v. 2), and Aaron’s rod represented the tribe of Levi (v. 3).
 2. It was God’s intention that the budding of a dead rod would cause the murmurings of the people to cease.
 3. Through the budding of the rod, God spoke to the Israelites and also to Aaron—v. 8.
- E. The budding rod signifies our experience of Christ in His resurrection as our authority in the God-given ministry—Heb. 9:4; Num. 17:1-10:
1. The budding, blossoming, fruit-yielding rod signifies the resurrection life of Christ with its authority—v. 8; John 11:25.
 2. Resurrection is the basis of authority—2 Cor. 1:8-9; 10:8; 13:4, 10:
 - a. The budding rod indicates that authority is based on resurrection—Num. 17:8.
 - b. The basis of God’s appointment of authority is resurrection—2 Cor. 1:8-9; 10:8; 13:10.
 - c. The basis of God’s vindication of His appointed authority is resurrection—Num. 17:5, 8.

V. One who has been appointed by God to be a deputy authority must be a proper representative of God—12:3-8; 16:1-5, 28; 2 Cor. 5:20:

- A. In Exodus and in Numbers 12 and 16, Moses represented God in a proper way.
- B. We need to learn a serious lesson from the one time that Moses failed to represent God—20:2-13:
1. In striking the rock twice and in calling the people rebels, Moses did not sanctify God in the sight of the people of Israel—vv. 10-12:
 - a. To sanctify God is to make Him holy, that is, separate from all the false gods; to fail to sanctify God is to make Him common—v. 12.
 - b. In being angry with the people and in wrongly striking the rock twice, Moses failed to sanctify God—vv. 10-11.
 - c. In being angry when God was not angry, Moses failed to represent God rightly in His holy nature, and in striking the rock twice, he did not keep God’s word in His economy—vv. 10-12.
 - d. Moses offended both God’s holy nature and His divine economy; he condemned the people as rebels, but he was the one who rebelled against God’s word—vv. 10, 24; 27:12-14.
 2. In all that we say and do concerning God’s people, our attitude must be according to God’s holy nature, and our actions must be according to His divine economy.
- C. The apostle Paul was an ambassador of Christ, representing God—2 Cor. 5:20:
1. A new covenant minister is one who has been authorized with the heavenly authority to represent the highest authority—3:6; 5:20.
 2. Paul exercised his apostolic authority not for ruling over the believers but for building them up—10:8; 13:10; 1:24.
 3. Paul exercised the authority inherent in his apostleship by teaching, by engaging in spiritual warfare, by moving within the measure of God’s rule,

and by his jealousy for Christ over the believers—1 Cor. 4:17; 2 Cor. 10:3-4, 13; 11:2.

- D. A person who represents God rightly must submit to authority (Matt. 8:8-9), realize that in himself he has no authority (28:18; 2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10), and be a person in resurrection, living in the resurrection life of Christ (1:9; 4:14; Num. 17:1-10).