

# Are We Under His Authority?

By Michael Clark

Have you ever been accused of "being in rebellion" or "not under a spiritual covering?" As the church accelerates toward the close of this age we hear this accusation more and more. I believe this is partially due to the rebellious age we live in, but I also believe we are hearing this more often because we are confused about what authority and covering are. Let's look in the Scriptures at another time when people were very rebellious.

There is a sad story in the Old Testament about Moses being forbidden by God to enter the Promised Land. He was doing so well, too, considering he was surrounded by rebellious people. He made one fatal mistake.

The books of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy all give an accounting of this tragic story and I will show them in that order.

Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, "Give us water, that we may drink."

And Moses said to them, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the LORD?" And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, "Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!"

And the LORD said to Moses, "Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?" (Exodus 17:1-7, NKJV).

Then the children of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the Wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh; and Miriam died there and was buried there. Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron. And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: "If

only we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! "Why have you brought up the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here? And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; nor is there any water to drink."

So Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they fell on their faces. And the glory of the LORD appeared to them. Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals." So Moses took the rod from before the LORD as He commanded him.

And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?" Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." This was the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with the LORD, and He was hallowed among them. (Numbers 20:1-13, NKJV). "Aaron shall be gathered to his people, for he shall not enter the land which I have given to the children of Israel, because you rebelled against My word at the water of Meribah. (Numbers 20:24, NKJV).

Now the LORD said to Moses: "Go up into this Mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the children of Israel. And when you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was gathered. For in the Wilderness of Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My command to hallow Me at the waters before their eyes." (These are the waters of Meribah, at Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin.) (Numbers 27:12-14, NKJV).

Then the LORD spoke to Moses that very same day, saying: "Go up this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, across from Jericho; view the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel as a possession; and die on the mountain which you ascend, and be gathered to your people, just as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people; because you trespassed against Me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah Kadesh, in the Wilderness of Zin, because you did not hallow Me in the midst of the children of Israel.

Yet you shall see the land before you, though you shall not go there, into the land which I am giving to the children of Israel." (Deuteronomy 32:48-52, NKJV).

There has been a lot of commentary on why Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land after all the suffering and rejection he went through with this rebellious nation, but the usual excuse theologians come up with is Moses struck the rock with his staff instead of speaking to the rock. This might be partially true, but I think it was only symptomatic of a far greater sin.

In the Exodus account Moses was commanded to strike the rock at the waters of Mirabah, but in the Numbers account he was to speak to the rock. Now I grant you this could have taken place on two different occasions at the same place and we all know that they didn't exactly make a bee-line for Canaan after they crossed the Red Sea. It took them forty years to make the two week trip.

No, I think the answer to our question lies in Numbers 20 verses 10 through 12. In verse ten Moses stood there in front of the people and chided them and said, "Hear now, you rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" Then he struck the rock with his staff and abundant water came out for the people and their animals. The next verse holds the key. God said to Moses and Aaron, "[Because you believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.](#)"

The word sanctify, is from the Hebrew word "qadash" which means to dedicate, consecrate, purify or cause to be clean. In all other instances before this when confronted with the rebellion of these people, Moses was careful not to call them names or speak for himself in any way, but to be God's spokesman to them and to intercede in their behalf (see Exodus 32:30-34; Numbers 11; 12; 14:1-21; and 16). Moses sinned at the waters of Mirabah because he failed to set God apart from his emotions before the people; instead he emotionally set himself apart from the people and from God as their judge. Thus He made God appear unclean by speaking for Him out of his own angry heart and taking credit to himself and Aaron, "Hear now, you rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?"

## **Types of Authority**

There are two kinds of authority in this world. The kind that kings, presidents, governors, military officers, and police have is power and authority delegated to them by men above them. This delegated authority is easy to identify. Those who have it are set apart in some fashion from the common man so that it can be seen that they are in authority. They either sit in a special building like the White House, a palace, or a governmental office building, or they ride in a special vehicle such as a royal carriage, limousine, or police car. Their clothes are often special, such as royal robes, uniforms or fancy suits. There is most always something that makes them noticeable in a crowd or sets them apart from the people. It is obvious that they have delegated authority and power. (Read Romans 13:1-6; Titus 3:1 and I Peter 2:13-16).

The other kind of authority is the kind that should be evident in the Church. I will call it transparent authority. God finds a yielded vessel totally given over to His divine authority and reveals His wishes for the people to him and he is an intercessor for them. There are many examples in the Old Testament of this kind of leader. They were primarily high priests, prophets, and judges such as Moses, Samuel, Elijah, and King David.

Moses was a shining example of God's transparent authority. God said to Moses, "See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh (Exodus 7:1)" When Moses spoke through Aaron to Pharaoh it was God speaking. He always without his own opinion spoke exactly what God wanted to say to Pharaoh and his people. He spoke the pure and clean, sanctified word of God. Thus he sanctified God in the eyes of the people, except for that one fateful occasion and that cost him his continued position of leadership in the promised land. He only got to see it from a distance for his failure was counted by God as rebellion.

Another example of God's transparent authority was Samuel the prophet, priest, and judge. There is no record that the Samuel ever blew it. He was God's pure conduit. He would inquire of God for the people and the people would hear from God through him. But where the rub came in during Samuel's life was when the people decided that being led by a man with transparent authority wasn't good enough for them. They had a better idea. Enter King Saul.

Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel. The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were

judges in Beersheba. But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice. Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations."

But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day--with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods--so they are doing to you also. Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them."

So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who asked him for a king. And he said, "This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots. He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, will set some to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers. And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants. And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the LORD will not hear you in that day."

Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles." And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he repeated them in the hearing of the LORD.

So the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed their voice, and make them a king." And Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Every man go to his city." There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. And he had a choice and handsome son whose name was Saul. There was not a more handsome person than he among the

children of Israel. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people. (1 Samuel 8:1-9:2, NKJV).

All through the Old Testament God made it plain He would rule over His people; they were not to be like the other nations. He would be their judge, and He would go before them and fight their battles! Wow! What a poor trade, a human king in place of the God of the universe to lead and fight for them!

Notice that Samuel's sons were operating in delegated authority just as Eli's sons and the people rejected them, but instead of waiting for God to deal with them and substitute another for them as He did with Eli's sons, they decided the authority structure the heathen nations had was what they needed. God told Samuel they rejected Him as their leader, not Samuel. Why? Because Samuel was God's transparent authority, Saul was not. To reject Samuel was to reject God. To seek a king to rule over them was rebellion against God.

They now chose to have a delegated form of authority so they could be under a rebellious form of government like the other nations. Tall, dark and handsome Saul proved what a mistake that was. He was after the form of Nimrod who ruled over the city of Babel where he made a name for himself and drew others behind him to rebel against God. This is the way of Cain (see Jude 1:12-14).

Granted, there were times when a king of Israel would demonstrate God's transparent authority as King David often did, but it was rare. Finally, about 600 BC., the last king of Israel was wiped out and the nation was sold into captivity. During all these years after Samuel, God still had His transparent authority in many different prophets, but the people were getting hard of hearing. He finally had to restore transparent authority through His Son Jesus Christ.

## **The Ultimate Transparent Authority**

While walking among men, Jesus demonstrated the ultimate in transparent authority. He said to His disciples:

"If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."

Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us."

Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:7-9, NKJV).

Now that is transparent authority!! To see Jesus was to see the Father. To hear Him was to hear the words of God.

There was a striking difference between the authority demonstrated by Jesus and that of the scribes and Pharisees. "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matthew 7:29).

It took a lowly Gentile soldier to figure out the difference between delegated authority and transparent authority and Jesus marveled at his understanding. The story reads as follows:

Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented."

And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him."

The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you." And his servant was healed that same hour. (Matthew 8:5-13, NKJV).

Jesus lauded this man's confession for manifesting a greater faith than all the Jews in Israel. He said the Gentiles would see Jesus' Godly authority, submit to it and sit down in the kingdom with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Jews' place. What a slam to the self-righteous Jewish leaders.

What was so great about what this Gentile said? Yes, he showed great faith by not demanding that Jesus come to his house, but there is more here. He said, "I am a man UNDER authority." He didn't say, I am a man OF authority. He spoke of his transparency between the officer above him and his men and acknowledged that is how it is with Jesus and His Father to us.

This kind of authority is fine in the world, but in the church we are not to be under mere men, but submit to God in all things just as Jesus did. Those who properly lead in the church are to guide us and come along side and never to rule over us as the flock of God. To be submitted to God is to be transparent and manifest Him to a dying world. To be under men in the church is to be back under the delegated system that is seen among the kings of the Gentiles.

. . .and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. (Romans 6:13, NASB).

Jesus was restoring God's transparent authority among men once again, and this time it would be in the form of His Church. He told His disciples in Luke:

And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called benefactors. But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. (Luke 22:25,26, NKJV).

Jesus came to show us how to lead as God's true servants.

And so when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments, and reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master; neither is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them." (John 13:12-17, NASB).

. . .and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:27,28, NASB)



## His Transparent Authority Was Given to the Church!

Just before Jesus ascended into heaven He spoke to the disciples and said, "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." (Luke 24:49, NKJV). The "promise of the Father" He was referring to was the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). After receiving Holy Spirit the apostles demonstrated this transparent form of authority over and over.

In Acts 2, they declared the gospel of the kingdom to men from many different nations who were gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. These non-believers all were able to hear these spirit filled believers in their own language by a divine impartation. Because they were simple Jews who didn't know foreign languages and the people knew it, great fear came upon many and about 3,000 people repented and accepted Jesus in one day.

In Acts 3 apostles Peter and John were going to the temple to pray. As they were about to pass through the temple gate, a lame man asked them for a donation and he got a little more than he bargained for. Peter told him, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have I give to thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." The man was instantly healed and was excitedly jumping all over the place and made quite a scene. When the people recognized what had happened they all came running to them. Then Peter spoke to the crowd and said, "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk?... And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all." Clearly God had restored to the earth His transparent authority once again in common men through faith in Jesus' name.

There are many other examples in the New Testament of God's men demonstrating His transparent authority. One of the more obvious ones is the account of Peter confronting Ananias and Sapphira about their sin of deception.

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?"

While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. (Acts 5:1-5, NKJV).

Wait a minute! Weren't Ananias and his wife standing there lying to Peter? Yes, but because Peter was walking in transparent authority, they were also lying to the Holy Spirit in him.

Well, it seemed that all was on the mend once again in the restoration of God's transparent authority over the earth, but not for long. Satan had a plan to regain his authority over men that was being lost to those who were finding their lives by losing them.

## **The Fly Got in the Ointment!**

Some time in the third century a fly (Beelzebub) got in the ointment. A chap named Gregory ( later known as Gregory the Worker of Wonders ) got saved. He proved to be quite influential in his native Pontus, "converting" almost everyone there to Christianity. Whether he preached the gospel of the kingdom is doubtful, because he found it necessary to make this transition from paganism to Christianity easier by substituting festivals honoring Christian saints for the old feasts to the pagan gods. Somehow I can't picture the apostles being pleased with feasts giving them honor instead of all glory going to their beloved Jesus (see Acts 14:8-15).

Later on in Armenia one Gregory the Illuminator, of the Armenian aristocracy, got on the Christian bandwagon and decided to propagate his new faith by converting the king. Good king Tiridates with the help of his nobles got the whole population to swing into line. Soon many pagan shrines and temples were converted to Christian use and many pagan priests were out of a job. Not to worry; the good king had a rehabilitation program. He made these heathen priests and their sons into Christian priests and bishops and "everybody was happy." The Church now had fancy shrines to meet in instead of those humble homes of the common man, which served so well for almost 300 years and the pagan priests were still in a position of power in the community instead of those humble servants of Christ leading the Church. "Insto-chango," everybody was a Christian, let's party!

This worked so well in Armenia, other monarchs saw a way to ease the tension this new faith out of Judea was putting on the Roman system. Enter the great Constantine.

Many Roman emperors had heavily persecuted the Christians in the first three centuries and the Church flourished and grew rapidly under it. After the last ditch efforts of emperor Diocletian to wipe out the Church by force, Satan had to come up with a new idea. And he found a willing adherent to this new plan in emperor Constantine. The story of how he became a Christian is quite involved, but the upshot was a new age of tolerance toward both Christians and pagans. This worked well; he maintained his title of "pontifex maximus" or the chief priest of the pagan state cult, and his position as the official Roman god. He also as the new "Christian" Emperor took to himself the title of "The Thirteenth Apostle."

Under him the new Church clergy gained a tax-exempt status which only pagan priests had enjoyed before, and soon there was a flood of rich Romans into the priesthood, taking advantage of this great tax loophole. With all these powerful Romans as leaders in the Church, it soon gained political power that was only before wielded by the Roman government itself. Soon the Christian Sunday and special feast days honoring Christian martyrs were observed and mingled with pagan holidays. Bishops were given the right to hear and settle lawsuits in their courts. Jews were forbidden to stone Jews who became Christians. Christian clergy and bishops became a regular part of the emperor's court. Constantine started a massive public works program building churches and cathedrals throughout the area for his new found faith.

Next he forbade the repair and construction of pagan temples and Christians were no longer to be forced to participate in their rituals. Finally, pagan rituals were totally abolished in Rome and their temples closed. By becoming a Christian one could now gain official favor of the emperor and even new opportunities for wealth.

Paganism never was totally wiped out. Many pagan traditions were incorporated into the new church of Rome. Pagan priests found their place in this new religion, and they brought in their idolatrous ways creating a whole new form of ritual and worship. Satan had won a great victory with the help of Constantine and his successors delegating their authority to the Church. God's transparent authority in his precious bride had all but been replaced by authority delegated by the emperor himself.

## **What Authority Is Demonstrated Today?**

How do men rule in the Church today? I grant you, great improvements have been made in the last six hundred years by the reformers and such, yet has God's transparent leadership been fully restored to the Church? Do we have godly apostles and prophets leading the Church out of the dark ages of Romanism or do we still have delegated authority operating in Church leadership with the Holy Spirit waiting on the side lines trying to get a word in edgewise? I have watched Church leaders push through our meetings with their agendas, totally oblivious to the need of themselves and others to be transparent enough for God to speak through them. In contrast look at the following verses.

Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.(Acts 13:1-4, NKJV).

The apostolic Church of the first century had reverence for the Holy Spirit instead of treating Him like some person who was crashing their party. Today we either treat Him as a "party pooper" or as our errand boy, giving Him orders on how He is to perform for us. It often grieves me to go to church services because of how the Holy Spirit is treated. I have also found that those in leadership that have not fear of grieving the Spirit, also have not fear of grieving the Bride of Christ.

Many churches have adopted convenient doctrines of dispensationalism, contrary to Scripture, which negate the need for apostles and prophets or any manifestation of the Holy Spirit in today's "organized" church. Ephesians 4:11 says that apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are necessary, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Also see Ephesians 2: 18-22)." I think that man had to invent these doctrines in order to explain away their church's deadness. Remember that true leadership by whatever name or gifting is still a bondservant to the people and are not called to rule over them.

The Church today more resembles a "fractured fairy tale" than that dynamic organism that Jesus envisioned in John 17:

"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me." (John 17:20-23, NKJV).

## **How About Our Covering?**

What about this problem of rebellion and not being under covering? I believe the Bible teaches that Jesus is our covering. The Greek word hilasterion is used in the New Testament in speaking of Jesus as our propitiation or atonement, but it was also translated mercy seat (see Hebrews 9:5). The mercy seat is the lid on the ark of the covenant just as Jesus is our covering in the new covenant. The Word says, "there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5)." "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ...(1 Corinthians 11:3)." Yes, Jesus is our only covering.

If a minister of God is truly walking in transparent authority with God, the demonstration of God's power should back up his words as was the case with the apostles. Paul refused to manifest his authority by using his intellect to make men feel inferior as we see happening so often from the pulpit today. Paul wrote to the Corinthian church:

And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. (1 Corinthians 2:1-5, NKJV).

This type of authority is, for the most part, missing in the church today. I believe it is because men have not purged themselves of their old natures and made themselves ready for the Bridegroom and also because they do not understand where godly authority comes from. When a man uses terms such as, "my flock" or "my church" or "as long as I'm the leader here...", is he appealing to his positional authority or a transparent authority that comes from being Jesus' clear channel? Didn't Jesus say that the Church is His (Matthew 16:18), the sheep are His and they follow Him (John 10:27)?

As long as church leadership must have special buildings and offices to set themselves apart from the sheep, or special clothes or special chairs to sit on and elevated platforms so people can see who is in charge, it is obvious they are still trying to operate under delegated authority and desire to rule over the flock.

If godly leadership in the church is truly transparent and you are hearing the Good Shepherd's voice through one another, there will be no conflict or questions about who's in charge. If you put yourself under the covering of a man who is not transparent, but modeling his ministry after the pagan priests and kings, chances are good that you will be under a thief and a robber who will try to steal away your rightful place in Christ unto himself and eventually cause you a deep wounding.

One further thought. We must be careful that we (especially Americans, for our nation was founded in a rebellion) are not throwing off all restraint in our attempt to be free of the abusive authority that so many of us have suffered under in our lives. God's Holy Spirit also gives us a spirit of humility by which we can receive correction from one another by submitting to one another in Godly fear. As you pray for Godly leadership to be restored to the Church, also pray for the humility of heart that you need in order to recognize it when it comes.

May God grant the Church's leaders the brokenness that it will take to transform them into transparent men of God or replace them with men who do humbly guide His flock. And may He once again tune in the hearing of the sheep so that another's voice they will not hear. "And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers (John 10:5)."