

DELEGATED AUTHORITY VS ASSUMED AUTHORITY

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In this lesson we shall consider primary authority, delegated authority and assumed authority, the first two of which the scriptures recognize and approve; the latter, is neither recognized nor approved.
2. Since our emphasis will be on delegated and assumed authority, and since the one is scripturally recognized and approved, while the other is not, our topic is therefore: Delegated Authority Vs Assumed Authority.
3. I hope you understand and appreciate the importance and significance of this matter, even at this point. But, if not now, then certainly by the time the study is concluded.
4. Of course, we must have Bible authority for what we believe, teach and practice in religion, Mt.21:23-27; 2Tim.3:16,17; 1Cor.4:6; Col.3:17; 1Pet.4:11; Rev.22:28,29; 2Jno.9; Cf. Deut.4:2.

II. DISCUSSION

A. WE BEGIN WITH A VERY BRIEF STUDY OF PRIMARY AUTHORITY WHICH RESIDES IN GOD, THE FATHER.

1. Definitions.
 - a. "Authority" is that right to state or prescribe law, as found in human relations (political, civic, domestic, religious or spiritual, et al.); that right to command or direct and enforce obedience or administer punishment.
 - (1) To authorize a thing is to empower to act or to direct by authority.
 - b. "Primary"
 - (1) "Original; first in order of time"
 - (2) That which stands first in rank or importance"
 - (3) Involved in "primary" is the idea of:
 - (a) Ultimate, meaning "beyond which it is impossible to go; final; being that to which all the rest is directed."
 - (b) Inherent, meaning "existing in someone or something as a natural and inseparable quality, characteristic or right."
2. Primary authority resides in God the Father as the ultimate

source

- a. It is not capricious, but is ordered by the character of Deity and the reality of His Creation.

- b. All things are of God, who is omniscient and omnipotent. He judges all, and is judged of none; there is no court of appeals beyond which or above which one can go.
 - c. The absolute basis for all rule in human affairs is this ultimate authority, which resides in God, the Father. Otherwise, the **right** to rule would be inherently synonymous with **might** to rule and would be subject to the capriciousness of the ruler instead of the principles of truth and justice.
 - d. In God, the holy and righteous Father, the demands of ultimate authority are met.
- 3. Therefore, we are forced to the conclusion that in divine affairs, in things pertaining to our souls in serving God in work and worship, all authority inheres in God, the Father, as the ultimate source.
 - 4. This also means that any authority anyone else has in human affairs, including spiritual matters pertaining to our souls, must be delegated authority, to which we now turn our attention.

B. DELEGATED AUTHORITY AND WHO HAS IT OR WHO OPERATES UNDER IT.

- 1. Delegated authority
 - a. Is authority or power to act entrusted to a person as one's agent or representative.
 - b. Is authority given by one with authority to another authorizing or empowering that one to act as directed.
 - c. In religion or in spiritual matters is authority or power to act given by God and or Jesus Christ to a person or persons to act as their agents or representatives in work or acts divinely ordained.
 - d. The following are examples of delegated authority: ---
- 2. The O.T. prophets operated under divinely delegated authority as they were "moved by the Holy Spirit," 2Pet.1:20,21; Neh.9:30.
 - a. God spoke by them in time past to the fathers, Heb.1:1.
 - b. David is an example, 2Sam.23:1,2; Ac.1:15,16 (Psa.41:9); Mk.12:36 (Psa.110:1); Ac.2:29-32.
 - c. Also: Isaiah, Isa.48:16; Jeremiah, Jer.1:1,2,4-10; Ezek.:1:3
- 3. The high priests of the Law of Moses operated under divinely delegated authority in their office, not taking this honor unto

themselves, but called of God, as was Aaron, the first high priest, Heb.5:1-5.

4. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, operated under delegated authority given to him by God, the Father.
 - a. It was the subject of O.T. prophecy, Deut.18:18,19. Cf. Isa.11:1-5; 42:1 (Mt.12:18); Isa.61:1 (Lk.4:14-21).
 - b. It was a matter of prophecy fulfilled in the N.T.
 - (1) Mt.12:14-18 (Isa.42:1; Lk.4:14-21 (Isa.61:1); Mt.9:6-8.
 - (2) As claimed:
 - (a) By the Father, Mt.17:5.
 - (b) By Jesus himself, Mt.28:18-20; Jno.5:22,26-30; 5:36,37; Jno.12:48-50; 17:1-4,8,18.
 - (c) By Peter, Ac.3:19-26; 2:36.
 - (d) By Paul, Heb.1:1-3,8,9; 1Cor.15:22-27; Eph.1:19-23; Col.1:13,14; Col.3:17.
5. The apostles of Jesus Christ operated under delegated authority from Jesus himself as they were guided by the Holy Spirit, Mt.28:16-20; Mk.16:14-20; Lk.24:44-53; Jno.20:19-24; Ac.1:1-12; 1:21-2:4; Jno.14:25,26; 15:26,27; 16:5-15; 17:8,18-21; 1Cor.2:9-13; Rom.1:1-5; 15:15,16; Gal.1:11-23; 2:7,8; Eph.3:1-11; 2Pet.1:1,16.
6. Qualified men who are selected and appointed as elders in local churches have been divinely delegated as their overseers, bishops or pastors.
 - a. Each local church is to have a plurality of elders, bishops or pastors when it has men qualified to serve, Ac.14:21-23; Tit.1:5; Cf. 1Tim.3:1-7; Tit.1:5-9.
 - b. These elders have oversight authority divinely entrusted to them, Ac.20:28; 1Th.5:12,13; 1Tim.5:17; 1Tim.3:4,5; Heb.13:17; 1Pet.5:1-4.
 - c. Their authority and or oversight is limited to the local church and its work where they are elders; it begins and ends there, Ac.20:28; 1Pet.5:2.
7. Preachers or evangelists are entrusted with divine authority to preach the word of God, the gospel of Christ, 2Tim.3:16-4:5; 1Tim.4:11-13,16; Tit.2:15.
 - a. Preachers or evangelists, as preachers or evangelists, have not been divinely entrusted with or given the right of oversight in local churches.

- b. Only if they are qualified, selected and appointed as one of the elders in a local church can they ever, with divine approval, have the right of its oversight, or the responsibility of doing so!

C. FINALLY, WE CONSIDER THE MATTER OF ASSUMED AUTHORITY OR ASSUMED OVERSIGHT.

1. Definition of assume.
 - a. To take or accept as being true without proof.
 - b. To take for granted.
 - c. To appropriate or take to or on or upon oneself; to adopt.
 - d. To take control of.
 - e. To confiscate or usurp.
 - f. In religion or spiritual matters, assumed authority is the taking to or upon oneself a work, a responsibility, or an oversight without the divine or scriptural right to do so, and to be guilty of usurping authority. Cf. 1Tim.2:12.
 - g. The following are some examples to consider:
2. Moses, God's law-giver of the O.T. (Jno.1:17a), could not justly or scripturally speak in God's **place**, thus assuming primary or ultimate authority.
 - a. He dare not do that, nor add to, take from, or substitute for God's law revealed through him to Israel as God's law-giver.
 - b. To have done so would have been assuming and usurping or taking authority which did not belong to him.
3. The O.T. prophets operating under divinely delegated authority could not speak in Moses **place**, thus assuming the authority of law-givers.
 - a. They dared not do that. They respected their place as God's prophets, not law-givers of God.
 - b. Had they dared to assume the place of God's law-givers, they would have been assuming, usurping or taking authority upon themselves which did not belong to them.
4. Under the law of Moses no ordinary priest dared to assume the office of high priest, Heb.5:1-4; Exo.28,29; Lev.8.
 - a. They had to be called of God, as was Aaron, the first high priest, v.4.
 - b. Priests could be ordained only from the tribe of Levi.
 - c. Only those of the tribe of Levi and from the family of Aaron (his sons) could be ordained as high priests.

- d. No one from any other tribe dared assume the office and function of priesthood under the Law of Moses, and certainly not that of high priest.
5. Even Jesus Christ himself, as God in the flesh, who had emptied himself of his equality with God (Phil.2:6-8) dare not assume the role and function of God the Father while here on earth in the flesh.
 - a. He and the Father were one in essence, nature and purpose, etc. while he was both God and man in the flesh.
 - b. But they where not one in role,function and authority while he was both God and man in the flesh, Jno.5:22,27-30,36,37; 12:48-50; 17:1-4,8,18;1Cor.15:27.
 - c. He came to do the Father's will, not his own; he willingly subjected himself to the Father's will; he was in service to the Father's will in the absolute sense.
6. In the N.T. the apostles of Jesus Christ could not speak in God's place, thus assuming primary or ultimate authority. Cf. 2Th.2:3,4.
 - a. But they, as the ambassadors for Christ, did speak in Christ's stead, 2Cor.5:20.
 - (1) "In Christ's stead," i.e., one who does a thing for another. – Thayer, p.638. Cf. Rom.15:30.
 - (2) "On Christ's behalf," TCNT.
 - (3) "As one representing Christ," Williams.
 - (4) "We entreat you in Christ's name," Knox.
 - (5) "As his personal representative we say," Phi.
 - (6) "We beseech you on behalf of Christ," ASV.
 - b. What they received through the agency of the Holy Spirit as Christ's ambassadors they spoke, Jno.16:13; 1Cor.2:12,13; Eph.3:3-5; 1Jno.1:3.
 - c. Their authority as ambassadors of Christ to bind and to loose (Mt.16:19; 18:18) was neither *legislative* (1Cor.14:37), *judicial* (Jno.5:22,27; Jas.4:12), nor *executive* (2Cor.13:8; 10:8), as was the authority of Christ, and they dared not assume such a position in God's scheme of human redemption. Cf. 2Cor.2:17; 4:1-7.

D. SOME EXAMPLES OF ASSUMED AUTHORITY IN VIOLATION OF GOD'S WILL, EACH OF WHICH WAS OR IS CONDEMNED.

1. Aaron assuming the right to authorize the making and the worshipping of the molten calf, Exo.32.
2. The priests, Nadab and Abihu, assuming the right to burn incense with strange fire before the Lord, which the Lord had not commanded, Lev.10:1-7.
3. The sedition of Miriam and Aaron against Moses, because he had married an Ethiopian woman, in seeking to assume authority along with Moses, saying: "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? (Num.12:1,2), Num.12:1-15.
4. Moses' example of assumed authority in Num.20:7-12.
 - a. His authority: "Speak to the rock," vv.7,8.
 - b. His assumed authority: His right to strike the rock, which he did "twice," v.11.
 - (1) He did part of what God authorized, v.9.
 - (2) He secured desired results; he brought forth water for the people and their animals, v.11.
 - c. God's charge against Moses: Unbelief and disobedience, v.12a.
 - d. The penalty he and Aaron were to suffer, vv.12b,23-29; Deut.34.
5. The man of Num.15 assuming authority to work on the Sabbath day in violation of the Sabbath-law, Num.15:32-36.
6. The case of Achan assuming he could disobey God's law forbidding taking of "the accursed thing" in the battle of Jericho and avoid the penalty, Josh.7.
7. Other N.T. examples:
 - a. Peter denying Christ, Mt.26:69-75.
 - b. Judas Iscariot betraying Jesus, Jno.13:21-27; Ac.1:25.
 - c. The avarice and deception of Ananias and Sapphira, Ac.5.
8. Present-day examples.
 - a. Ketcherside's doctrine and practice of "evangelistic oversight".
 - (1) He claimed an evangelist could not be "located" with a local congregation as the regular preacher once elders were appointed.

- (2) But an evangelist could have “evangelistic oversight” in and over more than one local church when and if there were no elders.
 - (3) This is clearly an example of “assumed” authority, because there is no “book, chapter and verse” giving evangelists, as evangelists, oversight authority in any local church.
- b. A local church becoming a sponsoring church under the direction of its elders in brotherhood works involving unscriptural congregational cooperation – the following being a few of the many examples of churches and elders assuming work and oversight without divine approval and beyond the scope of divine authority for elders of local churches.
- (1) The Herald of Truth under the 5th and Highland Church and her elders in Abilene, TX, as the Sponsoring Church.
 - (2) The Broadway church of Christ in Lubbock, TX, and the work in Germany.
 - (3) The White’s Ferry Road church of Christ in Monroe, La.
 - (4) The Overland Park church of Christ, Overland Park, Kansas:
 “The Downtown church. Almost two year have passed since this congregation (Overland Park) agreed to assume the oversight (emp. mine, ejd) of the work in the inner city area of Kansas City. This is a cooperative effort of a number of sister congregations in the metropolitan area, assisted by other congregations and individuals outside the area...
 “Cooperating congregations are supplying teachers on a quarterly basis to provide a good educational program...
 “The Missions Committee for the Downtown work consists of...” – Tidings, Vo. XIII, No.24, June 18, 1974.
 - (5) Other examples could be cited of one eldership assuming oversight of more than one church – more than the one church where they are elders.

- (6) In the case of sponsoring churches and their elders, they, like Moses, do part of what God authorizes.
 - (a) They preach the gospel.
 - (b) They bring in the numbers.
 - (c) But they, like Moses, operate without authority and therefore commit sin. Cf. Mt.7:21-23.
- c. The sin involved with sponsoring churches and their elders is obvious.
 - (1) Each eldership's authority and oversight is limited to, or it begins and ends with, the local church where they are appointed as elders, Ac.20:28; 1Pet.5:2.
 - (2) That being the case, when they assume the oversight of more than one local church, or any part of the work of another local church or churches, they are "over-extending" their God-ordained authority and oversight and thus are assuming authority which does not belong to them, which is sinful.
 - (3) Their actions and their practice in becoming sponsoring churches and sponsoring elderships are no more right or pleasing to God than were those of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Miriam and Aaron, Moses in striking the rock, the Sabbath breaker of Num.15, Achan, Peter, Judas Iscariot, or Ananias and Sapphira.
 - (4) No more right than infant baptism, instrumental music in worship, eating the Lord's Supper on Thursday night, washing feet as an act of N.T. worship, or sprinkling for baptism!

III. CONCLUSION

1. Surely, by now you can see, understand and appreciate:
 - a. What we mean by both delegated authority and assumed authority.
 - b. The significance and importance of delegated authority vs assumed authority.
2. We have shown by both O.T. and N.T. book, chapter and verse, as well as by both O.T. and N.T. examples, that delegated authority is

scripturally recognized and exemplified as divinely ordained to certain men and institutions for specific purposes for certain times.

3. We have found no authority for men to assume in the absence of divine authority – the silence of the Scriptures never authorize any action on the part of men in any service unto God whether in work or worship.
4. Assumed authority was never accepted in the O.T.; it was always rejected and condemned as a violation and disobedience of God's will.
5. What makes men of today assume it is any different in the N.T. dispensation?
6. Don't forget: We must have divine authority for what we believe, teach and practice!
 - a. Let us not be guilty of paying lip service to that principle!
 - b. Too many pay lip service to it, then deny it in practice!!