

EXECUTED

TO SUPPRESS

HIS MESSAGE



Does God Appoint Pastors?

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Introduction

Welcome to Volume 2 of *Executed to Suppress His Message*.

In Volume 1 ([Suppressing the Words of Christ](#)) we saw how money-funded, institutionalized religions suppress the teachings of Jesus Christ, so they can promote their own particular doctrines and beliefs. And now with this volume, we continue to address these suppressed teachings.

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Modern Christianity is founded on a single premise: Christians are unable to have a relationship with God, without the help of an ordained ministry. Therefore God appoints trained pastors and preachers, giving them the authority to watch over, manage and teach Christ's Church.

But there's a problem:

The premise that God calls and promotes a specially-trained human ministry is simply not true.

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## 1 — Only One Christian Pastor

### ***Christianity teaches:***

That God “shepherds” His church through an ordained human ministry.

### ***But Jesus Christ taught:***

That He (Jesus) is the only spiritual shepherd, leader and teacher of God’s people — and that Christians should be getting their spiritual information directly from His teachings, which were passed on to us by His apostles.

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Jesus told 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jews the solution to all their spiritual problems was to reject their religious leaders and begin to follow Him. But thanks to institutionalized Christianity, few Christians know that Jesus gave this very same instruction to His Church.

Therefore, whether they consist of a dozen people meeting in homes or large congregations of thousands, most Christians obtain their spiritual information by following what they consider to be “inspired leaders,” whom God has called to pastor, lead and teach their congregation.

*Preachers have literally ushered Jesus out the door, and taken upon themselves the responsibility for teaching God’s people.*

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To support their particular set of doctrines, most churches create a Statement of Beliefs, which is a document announcing what the church expects its members to believe. Such a statement also functions as a doctrinal test. Therefore, if you disagree with your church’s Statement of Beliefs, you may have a “spiritual problem.” And in many congregations, those who disagree with church doctrine may be asked to stop attending church.

Thus modern Christianity is divided into two levels: *leaders* and *laity*. Lay Christians never look to other lay brethren for spiritual information. Instead, they believe God reveals all spiritual information through the leaders of their church.

But here we find yet another problem:

*Jesus Christ prohibited Christians from using the leader-laity model within His Church.*

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2 — No Hierarchy in Early Church

You may be quite surprised to learn how this two-tiered style of fellowship with a teaching leadership and a non-teaching laity, was not practiced during the early years of Christ's Church. For example, notice what the apostle Paul wrote to the early Corinthian brethren about their worship services:

Let two or three prophets speak ... (I Corinthians 14:29-31).

Here the original Greek translated "prophets" can mean either *prophet* or *inspired speaker*. But notice how in Luke 16:16, Jesus said "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John (the Baptist); since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached." And from this we learn how human prophets no longer speak for God – because under the New covenant, God speaks directly through His Divine New Testament Prophet Jesus Christ ([John 12:49](#)).

So since Paul could not have been writing about human New Testament prophets (since there are none); he must have been discussing those who share inspired messages among Christian fellowships.

Now let's continue with what Paul wrote:

... and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. For you can all prophesy (share inspired messages) one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted.

These verses contain a great deal of information. First, Paul thought that at least two or three people should speak at every assembly — so there was no single "pastoral" speaker as there usually is today. Paul also suggested that if a listener felt something was revealed to them during a sermon, the speaker should allow that person to interrupt.

Finally, Paul suggested the congregation should "pass judgment" on the presentation. Here the Greek means *to make a distinction* or *to discriminate*. One can imagine a situation where people sat together and discussed the sermon, giving their opinions on the subject matter and trying to reach a consensus on whether the speaker's presentation was correct. Then Paul finished his instruction by reiterating how all members

of the fellowship should share their inspired thoughts with the congregation.

But of course, modern Christian churches would never allow any of these practices today. I would be surprised if the reader has ever attended a church where people could interrupt the speaker and share their own point of view. And I'm quite certain you've never sat in a congregation that held group discussions to determine if the pastor's sermon was correct!

With today's Christian fellowships, it's just assumed the preacher knows what he or she is talking about — and the rest of the congregation has nothing to offer.

The Early Church "Proved all Things"

Now let's look at another early church practice. In Acts 17:10-11, a group of people were listening to one of Paul's sermons. And I want you to notice how these people responded to what Paul said:

The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, *examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.*

Back in the 1st Century, potential converts didn't automatically accept the words of a preacher like Paul. Instead, they studied the Scriptures on their own to determine whether Paul was telling the truth.

Furthermore, Paul was in complete agreement with what these people were doing — with how they were "testing" what he said against the Scriptures. The proof is in I Thessalonians 5:19-21:

Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good.

Paul was not against his listeners questioning and dissecting what he said. Furthermore, he wrote how those who listened to sermons should retain only what they proved to be truthful and good.

And the apostle John felt the same way. Notice what he wrote in I John 4:1:

Beloved, do **not** believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, *because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

John explained how evil spirits inspire “many” false preachers. Therefore every Christian has a responsibility to test and prove that those who claim to share Christ’s teachings are indeed telling the truth.

Think About This

Two of the most respected apostles warned us to never blindly accept what people preach to us. Instead, they cautioned that we should check the Scriptures to prove and validate what we hear. Furthermore, we’ve seen several examples of how early Christians did just that.

But today, most Christians conclude something like this: “Well, our pastor and the other preachers have been specially trained in college to know and teach God’s truth — so we just trust them” (even though there are thousands of Christian denominations, all of which teach different and often contradictory doctrine).

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### 3 — Doctrine No Longer Proved

As related in Volume 1, Chapter 8 ([Suppressing the Words of Christ](#)) of *Executed to Suppress His Message*, a 1989 United Nations study concluded there were over 23,000 separate and distinct Christian denominations, with each having doctrines sufficiently different from all the others, that their members refuse to fellowship with Christians from other denominations.

And the situation has only grown worse over time. Just 22 years later, a 2011 study by Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary found there were over 45,000 denominations teaching different interpretations of Christ's gospel!

So which of these Christian denominations are teaching the correct gospel?

Or perhaps there's a more pertinent question:

*Are any of them teaching Christ's true gospel?*

Today there are thousands upon thousands of versions of Christ's message, all of which are fully-accepted by church members. Yet back in the early church when there existed only a few variations of the gospel, Christians and potential converts didn't even trust what the apostles taught!

*Instead, the followers of Christ verified doctrines on their own — as the apostle John instructed in I John 4:1.*

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#### The Early Church: Where Everyone Preached

Let's return to I Corinthians 14:31 and re-read something Paul wrote:

*For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted.*

Within these early Christian fellowships, everyone shared their spiritual thoughts. And each member of the fellowship had opportunities to relate their spiritual knowledge. Therefore, preaching was not limited to a few educated leaders who followed an established Statement of Beliefs.

*Instead, the fellowship taught itself.*

### **Think About This**

In the original church established by Jesus Christ, each and every member had a personal responsibility to study their Lord's teachings, then share and discuss those teachings with the rest of the congregation (and of course, interested non-believers).

But today, Christians can only imagine the heartfelt spiritual discussions these brethren must have had, as they worked together to review and sharpen their understanding of Christ's teachings.

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4 — Why God Calls Christians “Sheep”

The early Christian church lived in an agrarian society where sheep were in abundance. Therefore, 1st Century Christians observed and understood how sheep and their shepherds interact. But today, most Christians haven't been within 100 feet of a sheep — so there's a lot we can learn about these animals and their shepherds.

Let's start by reading a familiar passage from the Psalms:

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want (Psalm 23:1).

This Psalm describes how a good and responsible shepherd provides everything his sheep require. And here the phrase “I shall not want” could be more accurately translated, “I won't lack anything.” Or as the *Contemporary English Version* states, “I will never be in need.”

But understand: this passage is not discussing animals. The subject is the relationship between Christ and His spiritual sheep (Christians). So when the Lord is your Shepherd, you will never lack for anything spiritual.

Now continue with verse 2:

He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters ...

The Psalm goes on to describe how the Spiritual Shepherd (Christ) personally leads God's people to their spiritual pasture (their spiritual food).

However, modern Christians do not consider Jesus their spiritual Shepherd — neither do they believe that Jesus personally leads His sheep to their spiritual nourishment.

Instead, Christians believe that Christ uses a paid ministry to lead, teach, and guide His sheep.

How Sheep and Shepherds Interact

My family owns a ranch where it has raised sheep for many generations.

And once I was able to spend a week at this ranch. During my stay, this city-raised author was quite surprised to learn that sheep are grazing animals — and they *feed themselves*.

So after decades of church attendance and countless sermons discussing how sheep are God's example of Christ's disciples, why was I never told this fact?

Here are some amazing facts about 1st Century sheep — those same sheep Jesus used to represent His disciples:

- *Ancient 1st Century shepherds did not feed their sheep;*
- *Instead, the shepherds led their sheep to a pasture; where the sheep fed themselves.*

Now it's true that some modern farmers place sheep in pens where they are fed hay, silage and grain. But back in the day when Jesus walked the earth, sheep always found their own food on free pasture.

Therefore, when Psalm 23 states "the Lord is my Shepherd," the passage paints a very different picture than what we see in today's churches, where people go to church to be spiritually "fed" by their preachers.

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## 5 — Professional Pastors Rise Up

It's been a long time since God's people understood these scriptural analogies about the Savior and His sheep — analogies that show how God's people should seek out and obtain their own spiritual food. Within a few decades of the Lord's death, a new generation of Christian preachers were telling Christ's disciples they required specially-trained teachers. And this new doctrine grew so rapidly, the apostle John had to address it in [1 John 2:27](#), where he wrote, “you *have no need for anyone to teach you.*”

Unfortunately, few Christians believed what John wrote. And so with each passing generation, God's people looked more and more to their self-appointed human leaders, and less and less to the words of Christ. And by the time the first printed Bibles began to appear, Christianity's “one and only” Teacher and Spiritual Leader (Christ) had been completely replaced by human leader-teachers.

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It was during this period of history that Bible translators and copyists began to modify Scripture, so it would appear that God appoints professional preachers and church leaders. The oft-quoted Acts 20:28 in the King James version of the Bible (KJV) provides an excellent example:

*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

Here the Greek translated into the English “feed” is *pot-mah'ee-no*. But this word does not now, nor has it ever referred to shepherds “feeding” their sheep. *Walter Bauer's Greek-English Lexicon of the Bible* documents how *pot-mah'ee-no* specifically means *to tend a flock*. Furthermore, Bauer notes how the ancients used *pot-mah'ee-no* to refer to slaves that shepherds would assign to watch over their sheep.

Thus *poy-mah'ee-no* describes a person who watches over, cares for, and protects the sheep — not someone who feeds the sheep. And we know this to be true, because back in the 1st Century, shepherds led their sheep to a pasture where the animals fed themselves.

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This same Greek word (*pot-mah'ee-no*) is used in [John 21:16](#), where the King James Bible translators claim that Jesus told Peter to “feed my sheep.” But here again, there’s nothing in the original language commanding Peter to “give food” to anyone. What Jesus actually said was that Peter should “watch over and care for” His spiritual sheep.

And the verses preceding and following John 21:16 are similarly mistranslated:

John 21:15: So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, *Feed my lambs.*

John 21:17: He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, *Feed my sheep.*

In both of these passages, the Greek verb *bos'-ko* is translated into the English “feed.” Bauer’s Lexicon observes how this word can mean either *feed* or *tend*. But since we’ve already seen how ancient herdsmen led their sheep to a pasture where the animals fed themselves, the only accurate translation can be “tend.” And this is why the more accurate NASB translates these verses, “Tend my lambs” and “Tend my sheep”.

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There are similar translator modifications within the Old Testament. One example is Ezekiel 34:10 in the KJV:

Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from *feeding the flock* ...

Here the Hebrew translated “feeding” either means “*to tend a flock,*” or it refers to animals grazing in a pasture without the aid of humans. Therefore the original Hebrew can only describe the Lord’s displeasure with those who were supposed to be tending (watching over) God’s flock.

So here again, there is nothing about shepherds feeding God's sheep.

We should also note how these translator-modified passages do not conform with [Psalm 23:1-2](#), which tell us Jesus is the sole Shepherd of God's sheep. Neither do they agree with [Psalm 25:4-5](#) & [Psalm 31:1-3](#), which state that it's Jesus who teaches, guides, and leads His followers to God's pasture.

*Contrary to what church-sponsored Bible translators would have us believe, the original Scriptures never suggest that human leaders should "feed" (teach) God's sheep.*

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6 — Misled By False Teaching

When modern Christians hear or read these mistranslated Bible passages, it's not surprising that they conclude their only spiritual responsibility is to go to church once a week to be "fed" by specially-trained leader/teachers. And after hundreds of years of such instruction, most Christians honestly believe their only duty toward a spiritual education is to go to church, sit in a chair, and listen to a trained minister plant what they consider to be "spiritual food" into their minds.

But do you remember how the apostle Paul wrote that everyone in a fellowship should share what they learn? And how Paul stated that everyone should do this, "so that all may learn and all may be exhorted"?

So given what Paul wrote, would you expect that everyone in a Christian fellowship will prosper spiritually, if most of the fellowship remains silent?

Now let's look at Hebrews 5:12:

For though by this time *you ought to be teachers*, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

The author of Hebrews (which many scholars now believe to be a fellow named Appolos) taught that all Christians should be teachers (Greek: *instructors*), who are qualified to share Christ's gospel with others.

Furthermore, when this biblical writer stated "you ought to be teachers," the original Greek refers to a "duty" each Christian is obligated to perform. Jesus used this same word in Luke 17:10:

So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought (that's the word) to have done.'

Thus according to Hebrews, the job of being a Christian instructor is not something optional: *every Christian has a duty and obligation to share the gospel with other people.*

But how can individual Christians take this obligation seriously, when the

salaried ministry never informs them about it?

Think About This

In most churches, preaching is carefully controlled by allowing only a few approved speakers, all of whom are hired to preach only those doctrines approved by the church's Statement of Beliefs. But when Christianity started out, Christ's followers were free to share whatever was on their minds. And the rest of the fellowship — feeding like sheep — would consume what spiritual food they chose to agree with, while rejecting that which they personally decided was untrue or not helpful.

But today, such lively and enlightening discussions between brethren are virtually unknown among modern Christians.

An Important Distinction

Even though all Christians are called to be spiritual teachers, we must forget how Jesus only authorized His disciples to teach the specific knowledge He passed on to us through His apostles:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, *teaching them to observe all that I commanded you*; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20).

So yes, Jesus wants — and needs — His followers to share what He taught. But the Lord has not authorized Christians to share their own doctrines and theological formulations. Instead, the Lord commands His followers to share the precise words He passed down to us through the apostles.

We must never forget what Jesus said in Matthew 10:24:

A disciple is not above his teacher ...

Christians: Called to Be Spiritual Experts?

Perhaps you're thinking: "Now hold on here: it's not *my* job to teach or to

become an expert in God's word — because all that really matters is that I accept Christ's sacrifice and repent." And of course, we're all entitled to that opinion.

But when a person states the above, isn't it much like saying: "Look, I've already repented and obtained *my* personal salvation, so there's really nothing more I need to do *for* Christ. Therefore, I've hitched my trailer up to my favorite church, and I'm going to follow them into to Kingdom of God."

Those who think this way might be surprised to learn how the apostle Peter disagreed with them. Look at II Peter 3:18:

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Peter was a very old man when he wrote this, and Christianity had been around for over 30 years. But even after decades of learning and growing in Christian doctrine, Peter believed that he and every other Christian needed to continually "grow" in spiritual knowledge.

Now look at what the apostle Paul wrote in Colossians 1:9-10:

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

Paul didn't think it enough to read and memorize some denominational Statement of Beliefs, then listen to a 45 minute sermon each week. Instead, he wrote that Christianity is a life-long quest for the knowledge of God.

But how can Christians embark on such a quest for spiritual knowledge, when everything they learn about God is funneled through one or two pastors, preaching in accordance with a rigidly-defined Statement of Beliefs?

Christians Cannot Share Their Beliefs

I previously mentioned how some estimate there are over 45,000 Christian denominations, with each promoting their own set of doctrines. And I showed how the leadership of these denominations formulate the organization's particular beliefs about God's truth, while excluding all other views and beliefs. Furthermore, such denominations often can be quite intolerant of members who share different doctrinal views, even when such sharing takes place within informal social environments.

So typically, if you are a member of a church and comfortable with your church's doctrines and beliefs, you probably accept that your church has God's truth — while all other churches preach that which is at least partially false. Moreover, you've likely concluded it best to avoid fellowship with Christians who believe differently than you.

And if this is how you handle Christians with other beliefs, then you should know that Jesus does not approve of this behavior. Read Luke 9:49, where the apostles tried to use this same “my way is the only right way, and your way must take the highway” approach:

... Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us.

Like many modern churches, the apostles applied their own “doctrinal tests” to this man — and he failed their tests. So they *forbid* him from speaking about Christ, even though he was using the power of God to cure people possessed by demons!

Now read how Jesus responded to the apostles, after they related what had happened:

But Jesus said to him, “Do not hinder him; for he who is not against you is for you” (Luke 9:50).

As Christians, we need to understand what happens when we use Statements of Belief or test doctrines. Whether we do it openly in our assemblies or even within our own minds, we limit God's ability to work through individuals. Our God is enormous and infinite. He has unlimited power and wisdom. And He works in uncountable ways. Therefore, it's just plain foolishness to set limits on what God is doing or saying through other people.

And it's even more foolish for a church organization to think it can

approve or disapprove what Christians believe.

Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand (Romans 14:4).

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## 7 — The Pastor of God's Sheep

Now let's get back to the "shepherd" concept we previously introduced. In [John 10:11](#) Jesus said: "I am the good shepherd." And I especially want you to notice how Jesus did not say "I am 'one' of the good shepherds:" *Jesus said He's the only good Shepherd.*

Then a few verses later in John 10:16, the Lord also said this:

*And other (Gentile) sheep I have, which are not of this fold (the Jews): them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*

So stop and read this carefully: because this is something every Christian needs to understand:

*The Lord and Savior Christians claim to worship and obey, declared that His New Covenant incorporates only one "fold" (church) — and this single church has only one Shepherd (pastor), Jesus Christ.*

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### So Who Are You Following?

Our modern world is literally immersed in a Christianity where worshipers find it difficult to personally study and follow the words of Christ, while they are quite comfortable following the teachings of their human shepherds (preachers and pastors). And if you are one of these people, I want to remind you of Psalm 23:1-2, which God inspired the prophet David to write down for us:

*The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures ...*

(Note: Within most Bibles, the original language translated into the English word "pastor" actually means *shepherd*).

Then Psalm 25:4-5:

*Make me know Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For you are the God of my salvation; For you I wait all the day.*

And Psalm 25:12:

Who is the man who fears the LORD? *He (the Lord) will instruct him in the way he should choose.*

Then finally, Psalm 31:3:

For You (the Lord) are my rock and my fortress; For Your name's sake *You will lead me and guide me.*

These informative Psalms remind Christians how:

- The Lord Jesus Christ is your spiritual teacher.
- Jesus is the one who leads you.
- Jesus is the one who guides you.
- Jesus is your only spiritual Shepherd (pastor).

Yet even though modern Christians gather each week to worship and sing praises to Jesus, the vast majority do not consider Him their “one and only” Spiritual Shepherd and Teacher.

### **Think About This**

In John 10:27, Jesus said: "My sheep (Christians) **hear My voice**, and I know them, **and they follow Me**. So why are do most Christians ignore these words of their Lord and Savior, preferring to follow the teachings of their human pastors and preachers?

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### **But Don't Pastors Have Authority?**

Many Christians will be quick to respond that God appoints pastors to rule over and teach the Church. But these people probably haven't read Luke 9:1-2:

Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.

Did you notice how Jesus said nothing about the apostles having authority over the church and its doctrines?

Yet many Christian leaders will quote Matthew 16:18-19, claiming that Jesus gave the apostle Peter all kinds of authority over his Christian brothers and sisters, and the church in general:

I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; *and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.*

And indeed, it certainly does sound like Jesus gave Peter a great deal of authority over many things — until you read this verse in it's context.

Moving ahead only two chapters to Matthew 18, we find Jesus giving His disciples a procedure for when they believe a brother has harmed them. The Lord explained how a Christian is to go to their brother alone and discuss the offense. But if talking to their brother does not resolve the problem, they should convince two or three others of how they've been harmed. Then if these additional brothers or sisters agree, they should join with the one offended in confronting the errant brother.

Finally, if the errant brother refuses to hear several brothers and sisters, the offended Christian is to bring the matter to the entire fellowship. And if the fellowship agrees that the brother committed wrongdoing — and he still refuses to repent and make the problem right — Jesus explained what should happen:

If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I say to you, *whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven (Matthew 18:17-18).*

Notice how the Lord used the very same “binding and loosing” language that He gave to Peter. Yet in Matthew 18, Jesus gave this instruction to ordinary disciples who were not apostles.

So understand this point: all Christians have the power to bind and loosen.

Therefore in Matthew 16 where Jesus was speaking to His apostles, He did not bestow some special kind of “apostolic authority” upon Peter.

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So what is this power to “bind and loosen?” In Matthew 16 where Jesus was talking to Peter, He associated “binding and loosing” with “the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” And Jesus told Peter he could bind and loosen *because* he had these keys of the Kingdom.

Now read Luke 11:52:

*Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering.*

Here we see how the Old Covenant religious authorities also had a “key.” And this key related to spiritual knowledge. Furthermore, these religious authorities were hindering people from entering something by withholding this key (this spiritual knowledge).

Now read Matthew 23:13:

*But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off *the kingdom of heaven* from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.*

And with this additional information, the meaning of the keys becomes clear. These matters of knowledge or spiritual “keys” — when withheld — prevent people from entering the Kingdom of God. And of course, we understand this specific knowledge to be the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So Peter was given knowledge of the gospel. Therefore he could “loosen” people from their sins and bring them to salvation through sharing that knowledge. But Peter also could choose to “bind” people to their sins by refusing to share the gospel.

Matthew 18 discusses the same principle. If a congregation concluded a person was in rebellion against God’s ways, they could ask that person to leave the fellowship. As a result, this person would lose access to knowledge of the gospel, which came through fellowship with other Christians. Remember, the early church didn’t have New Testament Bibles. The only way people could hear the gospel was through fellowship with Christians. Thus Jesus told ordinary, average Christians they could “bind and loosen” through their decision to share or not share



the gospel.

So understand this critical point:

*Christ did **not** give the apostles any special authority over the church to establish doctrine and determine what you or I should believe.*

In fact, Jesus strictly commanded the apostles to preach only the commandments and teachings He had given to them. And we can prove this with Matthew 28:20, where the Lord had risen from the dead and returned to instruct the apostles. The Lord confirmed their apostolic mission and sent them out to evangelize. But notice specifically what Jesus told the apostles to teach:

... teaching them to observe *all that I commanded you*; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20).

Clearly, the apostles had no authority to express their own views or opinions on Christianity and its doctrines: they were to repeat the teachings of Jesus to others.

### **Think About This**

No church pastor or minister — or even an apostle — has authority over what you believe as a Christian. Instead, your doctrinal beliefs are a personal matter between you and Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless, most modern Christians chose to believe the doctrines established by their church, rather than basing their faith on the words of Jesus Christ.

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### **But Don't Churches Have Authority Over Doctrine?**

Church authority is an important issue in the modern church. Churches claim to have authority “directly from God” to set doctrine, to tell Christians what they should believe, to counsel Christians with the wisdom of God, and to accept money on God’s behalf.

So I want you to read Matthew 20:25-27, where Jesus soundly refutes these concepts. In this passage, Jesus was responding to the mother of two of His disciples. This woman had just requested that her sons be

allowed to sit at His right and left hand in Heaven — and of course, these would have been positions of great power and authority. So Jesus called the disciples together for some important instruction:

But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

But it shall **not** be so among you ... (Matthew 20:25-26 — KJV).

And that's not at all difficult to understand: *according to Jesus Christ, there is **no authority** between brethren in His Church.*

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But Jesus was not finished. Continuing with the rest of verse 26, He added something else:

... but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

Most Christians read this verse, thinking Jesus was giving special credit to church pastors. *But the Greek translated "minister" has nothing to do with preachers.*

In the modern church, a Christian minister is usually one who is "in charge." He's the one who controls the church, gives the sermons, and accepts "God's money." But when Jesus said "minister," He used a Greek word that specifically means: *an attendant who waits on tables.*

*Thus those who are "great" in Christ's Church are busy serving in lowly jobs such as kitchen waiters — not respected spiritual leaders.*

Then finally, Jesus concluded this conversation with what is in verse 27-28:

And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.  
Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Modern churches often use the word "servant" to refer to their hard-working preachers. And indeed, Jesus did state that such a servant would be called "chief" among the brethren. However, the Greek translated into the English "servant" never refers to a person in authority; quite to the contrary, it means a *slave or bond servant*.

*Thus according to Jesus Christ, those who are “chief” within His Church are busy humbling themselves to perform menial tasks as if they were slaves of their brothers and sisters.*

### **Think About This**

The mother of these two disciples wanted Jesus to grant her sons the authority to sit in Heaven at His side, so they could exercise power and dominion over others. But Jesus said “no” to this woman — and in doing so, the Lord made it clear that God grants no authority to people in His church.

In the picture of the Church that Jesus painted, no one is running around telling others what to believe or what to do. Neither are they claiming that God has ordained them to personally represent Him, take charge of a congregation of believers, establish church doctrine, or collect money on His behalf.

The true and loyal followers of Jesus Christ are *servants*.

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8 — One Lord, Leader and Teacher

Let's read what Jesus commanded of His followers in Matthew 23:8:

But do not be called Rabbi; for **One** is your Teacher, and you are all brothers.

There's a lot of information in this verse. So let's carefully analyze it.

First, the Lord instructed His disciples to never allow anyone to call them Rabbi, which is a religious title meaning "my teacher." Thus Jesus plainly and pointedly prohibited Christians from using titles that suggest God has placed them in a special position to teach their brothers and sisters.

Then Jesus said, "... for One is your Teacher." The translators capitalized the words "one" and "teacher" because they knew Jesus was referring to Himself. Thus the Lord commands His followers — which includes all Christians — to never call another human being their spiritual guide, teacher, pastor or preacher.

Next Jesus said "you are all brothers." And here Jesus used a Greek word that means *the womb*. So yet again, Jesus reminds us how His Church consists of equal spiritual brothers and sisters who share a family relationship — with everyone at the same level and no one in authority, except Christ.

Then finally, the Lord concluded His teachings on this subject with this:

Do not be called leaders; **for One is your Leader**, that is, Christ (Matthew 23:10).

Think About This

The Lord's commands were clear and unambiguous: God does not allow *any* human being to have spiritual authority over His church. Furthermore, God's people should never consider another Christian their spiritual guide, leader or teacher.

God's only spiritual leader and teacher is the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Peter Agreed With Jesus

The apostle Peter shared a great deal of information about Christian leadership. So let's read what he wrote in I Peter 5:1-3:

Therefore, I exhort *the elders* among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed ...

When referring to “elders,” Peter used a Greek word that specifically means people of senior age. So Peter was talking about older Christians — not those who are ordained to positions of authority in the church.

Now look at verse 2:

... *shepherd* the flock of God among you ...

Here the Greek translated “shepherd the flock” is our old friend *poy-mah'ee-no*, which as we've already seen, means neither “shepherding” nor “feeding.” The most accurate translation is “watch over and care for the flock of God among you.” And take special note of how the flock *belongs to God* — not a church or its pastor.

Then Peter goes on:

... *exercising oversight* ...

Here the NASB, like other Bibles that promote pastoral authority, has mistranslated what Peter wrote. The original Greek translated into the English “oversight” is *episkopeō*, which means “to look over and care for.” And this word is never used to promote exercising authority over someone else.

Instead, the word describes a responsibility to care for another person. A good example is a baby sitter. A baby sitter may look over and care for your children, but we all understand that a baby sitter has no *authority* over your children.

Then Peter continues:

... not under compulsion, but *voluntarily*, according to the will of God; and *not for sordid gain*, but with eagerness;

The older brethren were to exercise their oversight function voluntarily — and never for financial gain.

Now take special notice of what Peter wrote next:

... nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge ...

And here the Greek translated into the English “lording” means *to control or subjugate*.

Thus according to Peter, the older brethren (elders) are to never take control the fellowship and have it in subjection. Furthermore, this is the same Greek word used in [Matthew 20:25-27](#), where we saw how Jesus prohibited such authoritative behavior within His Church.

Finally, notice how Peter closed this section of his letter:

... but proving to be *examples to the flock*.

And with this, we see the core and essence of Peter’s message about church leadership:

Christian elders (older brethren) do not “lead” by taking charge of a congregation and telling people what to believe and do. Instead, the elders “lead” by being living examples of proper Christian conduct.

The Apostle John Agreed with Jesus

The apostle John also disapproved of those who try to exercise authority over God’s people. Notice what he wrote in III John 1:9-11 (KJV):

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, *who loveth to have the preeminence among them*, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. Beloved, *follow not that which is evil*, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

Here the English “preeminence” is translated from the Greek *fil-op-rot-yoo’-o*, which means *fond of being first*. In other words, Diotrephes elevated himself above his brothers and sisters and took charge of the fellowship. This man spoke against those who preached messages different than his (including the apostle John!), and actually cast out

Christians who disagreed with his views.

And according to John, those who were following Diotrephes were following “evil.”

But What About Hebrews 13:17?

Hebrews 13:17 is commonly used by pastors who claim God has placed them into positions of authority over the church. But if this verse really supports this view, then it openly contradicts the teachings of Jesus, Peter and John.

So let's take a closer look at this passage:

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

This passage provides an excellent example of how church-sponsored Bible translators have “crafted” their work to support pastoral authority. Here the English “obey” is translated from the Greek *pi'-tho*. But *pi'-tho* means *to persuade, convince, trust or have confidence in* — and it was never used to command obedience.

Then there's the English “submit,” which is translated from the Greek *hupeikō*. But *hupeikō* always means *to yield or give way*, unless it's used metaphorically in reference to submitting to authority, which is not the case here.

So when we combines these two facts, we can see how the more accurate translation of this passage is as follows: “be persuaded by and yield to those who watch over you.” And we can find a confirmation of this revised translation in the *Modern King James Version*:

Yield to those leading you, and be submissive, for they watch for your souls, as those who must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.

And once we understand the proper translation of this passage, we find the author of Hebrews agreeing with Peter: when the leaders of Christ's Church (the older brethren) set an example of proper conduct and

behavior, younger Christians should submit themselves and emulate their example.

Nothing in Hebrews 13:17 suggests that God's people should submit to and obey those who claim to have authority over them. And Christian leaders (the older brethren) have no power or authority to tell other Christians what to do. Neither do they have any authority to create or approve doctrine. Nor has God promised to give the elders special abilities to understand spiritual matters or to counsel other Christians.

Finally, let's read Matthew 5:16:

Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Thus our Lord was in full agreement with Peter and the author of Hebrews: genuine Christian leadership is exercised by those who live a holy life, setting an example and witness for others to follow.

Think About This

According to the Bible, Christian "leaders" are not college-trained preachers who lead and control congregations. Instead, they are older spiritual brothers and sisters who serve as living examples of mature Christian faith.

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## 9 — Gospel Suppression Begins

As we saw in Volume 1 ([Suppressing the Words of Christ](#)) of *Executed to Suppress His Message*, it wasn't long until the false preachers predicted by Jesus and His apostles began to appear on the scene. Naturally, these men wanted the same level of power, prestige and money the Jewish rabbis enjoyed. But there was a problem: those who attended churches raised up by the original apostles were well aware of the Lord's prohibitions against human authority and the use of money within the Church. Therefore, 1<sup>st</sup> Century false preachers made little headway with these Jewish Christians.

But dishonest preachers found fertile ground in the Gentile churches raised up by the apostle Paul. These Christians had been taught that Christ was not enough: they needed Christian preachers to get to heaven. And thanks to Paul and his unique views on church authority, these Gentile Christians were actively seeking preachers that would take control of their assemblies and tell them what to believe and practice.

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### Two Opposing Views on Church Authority

The Bible contains two views on who is allowed to pastor (shepherd) God's people, along with how much authority can be exercised within Christ's Church. These two views can be summarized as follows:

View #1: As children of God the Father, all members of Christ's Church are spiritually equal brothers and sisters. Only Jesus has authority over the Church. And Christians are expressly prohibited from asserting dominance or control over their spiritual brothers and sisters. As we saw in previous chapters, this perspective was taught by Jesus, the apostles Peter and John, and the authors of Hebrews and Psalms.

View #2: Church authority resides with ordained human shepherds (called pastors, preachers, evangelists, etc.) which God has specially called and chosen to rule over the church. God authorizes these people to raise up churches, establish and disseminate doctrine, define Christian ethics, and enforce what they consider to be proper conduct within congregations of God's people. This perspective was taught exclusively

by the apostle Paul.

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If you are an average Christian, you're quite familiar with View #2. However, you've probably never even heard of View #1 — right? And why? Because modern churches suppress what Jesus and the other biblical writers taught about church authority.

Here's the most common way Christian churches suppress Christ's teachings:

- Step 1: Churches claim the Bible contains the “inerrant” word of God, without any errors, contradictions or incorrect translations;
- Step 2: And since the Bible is supposedly inerrant, preachers tell us there can be no errors or contradictions within the Scriptures;
- Step 3: Then churches present the apostle Paul's views on pastoral authority;
- Step 4: And finally, you are told that the rest of the Bible must agree with Paul, because an inerrant Bible can never contradict itself.

But there's a huge problem with this logic:

*Because the rest of the Bible most certainly does not agree with Paul!*

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### The Lord's Views on Pastoral Authority

Before we examine Paul's views on church authority, let's review what Jesus and several other New Testament writers taught:

- Jesus said there is only one spiritual shepherd (pastor) — not many ([John 10:16](#)).
- Jesus told His disciples (which included the apostles) that He is their only spiritual teacher and leader. Furthermore, the Lord commanded His followers to never call another human being their spiritual teacher, leader, guide or father ([Matthew 23:8-10](#)). Finally, Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me” ([John 10:27](#)).
- The apostle John wrote to Christians, “... you have no need for anyone to teach you,” because the words of Christ and the Holy

Spirit reveal all things spiritual ([I John 2:27](#)).

- Jesus instructed the apostles and disciples to teach only what He had taught them ([Matthew 28:19-20](#)).
- Jesus explained how His disciples (which included the apostles) have no authority over their brethren. Instead, the Lord commanded all Christians to behave as slaves in the service of their spiritual brothers and sisters ([Matthew 20:25-27](#)).
- The apostle Peter wrote that elders (the older brethren) should never Lord authority over other Christians. Instead, elders are to lead through their personal examples of proper Christian conduct ([II Peter 5:1-3](#)).
- The apostle John wrote that it's "evil" for a Christian to claim preeminence and try to assert authority over their spiritual brothers and sisters ([III John 1:9-11](#)).
- Jesus commanded Christians to never judge and condemn others ([Luke 6:37](#)).

The central themes of these passages are as follows:

- 1) Jesus is the only spiritual teacher, leader, and shepherd (pastor) of God's people;
- 2) Christ's sheep must follow their Lord and Savior and specifically His commandments;
- 3) Christians should never try to exercise authority over their brethren;
- 4) Christians have no need for professional teachers, because the teachings of Christ, combined with the power of the Holy Spirit, provide everything a Christian needs to know.

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### Paul's Views on Pastoral Authority

Now let's look at what the apostle Paul taught about pastors and church authority:

- Paul told the brethren to imitate *him*, rather than Christ ([I Corinthians 4:16](#), [I Corinthians 11:1](#)).

- Paul declared *himself* the spiritual “father” of brethren he claimed to have begotten through the gospel ([I Corinthians 4:15](#)).
- Paul claimed that God established positions of authority within the Church, such as apostles, prophets, shepherd/pastors and teachers ([I Corinthians 12:28](#) and [Ephesians 4:11-12](#)).
- Paul established the position of “bishop” to oversee and rule over congregations ([I Timothy 3:1-7](#)).
- Paul ordered that elders should be “appointed” in every city ([Titus 1:5-9](#)).
- Paul commanded the brethren to refuse food to those who were not working ([II Thessalonians 3:10](#)).
- Paul ordered women to remain silent in church meetings ([I Corinthians 14:34](#)).
- Paul established limits for the brethren helping widows ([I Timothy 5:3-6](#)).
- Paul stipulated when married couples can divorce and remarry ([I Corinthians 7:10-15](#)).
- Contradicting what Jesus commanded in [Luke 6:37](#), Paul passed judgment on an individual and commanded the brethren to cast him out of the Church ([I Corinthians 5:1-5](#)).
- Contradicting the Lord’s instructions in [Matthew 18:15](#), Paul told Timothy to rebuke sinners before the entire congregation ([I Timothy 5:20](#)).
- Contradicting Christ’s instructions in [Luke 9:49-50](#), Paul instructed Titus to severely reprove and silence those who disagreed with his views on doctrine ([Titus 1:10-13](#)).
- Paul told Titus to “Reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you” ([Titus 2:15](#)).

The central themes of Paul’s instruction are as follows:

- 1) God appoints specially-called and chosen human leaders (pastors, evangelists, and professional teachers) to act as a communication channel between Himself and lay Christians;

- 2) God's appointed human leaders have great authority — and Christians must follow the instruction of their human spiritual leaders;
- 3) God gives His appointed church leaders the authority to establish and regulate what Christians believe, what they can give to others, who they can marry, whether or not they can divorce, and whether they can speak during Christian assemblies;
- 4) God authorizes Christian leaders to publicly rebuke Christians.

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### The "Way" of Jesus Christ? — Or The "Rules" of Paul?

Although Jesus had harsh words for Old Testament preachers who were trying to deceive God's people, He always treated His disciples with great respect. Unlike Paul, the Lord never addressed His followers as if they were children. And the only time the Lord publicly rebuked a disciple was when Peter first did the same to Him.

Instead of Paul's constant correction and rebuke, Jesus taught God's religion by setting an example of the "way" to eternal life in the Kingdom of God, then leaving it up to the individual to choose to follow that way. Luke 12:13-14 provides an excellent example of how the Lord encouraged His disciples to follow and emulate the ways of God:

And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he (Jesus) said unto him, *Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?* (Luke 12:13-14).

Rather than directing this disciple and his brother as a parent might his children, Jesus effectively said: "Look, you're an adult. So go and take the principles I taught you and work this out with your brother." The solution to this man's problem was to look into the Lord's teachings and personal examples, then do what Jesus would have done in this situation.

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10 — The Consequences of Trusting Preachers

Matthew Chapter 4 relates how Jesus and the disciples traveled through Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and healing numerous sick people. And as the Lord's fame spread because of these miraculous events, great multitudes of people from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judaea, and from beyond the Jordan River gathered together and followed Jesus wherever He went.

Then in Matthew Chapters 5 through 7, we see how Jesus went up to a high mountain so he could speak to this multitude of people (this was the famous Sermon on the Mount). Here Jesus discussed many issues, some of which included spiritual behavior, persecution, the duty to be a light to others, keeping God's commandments, forgiving and loving others, giving alms, how to pray, how God cares for His people, and how Christians should not judge others.

Then finally at the end of this long speech about godly behavior, Jesus warned His followers to not be led astray by false spiritual teachers:

Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves (Matthew 7:15).

The most striking part of this passage is the Lord's description of these false preachers as "ravenous wolves" — which is a frightful description of how a wolf kills and then tears open the flesh of its prey. But since there's no biblical account of a preacher ever tearing open the flesh of God's people, it's obvious that Jesus was warning about a different kind of danger.

In the above verse, the English word "wolves" is translated from the Greek word λύκος, which means "wolf." However, Greek dictionaries tell us this word was also used metaphorically to describe *people* who are cruel, destructive greedy or rapacious.

And I want you to remember that word "rapacious."

Also note how Matthew 7:15 (above) uses the word "ravenous." Here the English is translated from the Greek ἄρπαξ, which also means "rapacious."

So now we have a Greek adjective that can mean “rapacious”, followed by a Greek noun that describes a “rapacious” person. And since the Lord Jesus Christ spoke these words, we can be assured that He meant exactly what He said.

So let’s read Matthew 7:15 the way Jesus meant it to be understood:

Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are *exceedingly rapacious*.

And now the most obvious question is: What did Jesus mean when He said “rapacious”?

Any English dictionary will tell us that “rapacious” means *aggressively greedy*. Common synonyms are grasping, greedy, covetous; mercenary, insatiable, predatory and avaricious (extreme greed for wealth or material gain).

Therefore, Jesus warned that even though these preachers appeared spiritual, they were secretly driven by an insatiable desire for money.

And this greedy conduct by those who were promoting themselves as God’s shepherds was nothing new. Over 600 years before our Lord’s warning about greedy false preachers, He inspired the prophet Ezekiel to write the following:

"As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "surely because My flock has become a prey, My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd, and My shepherds did not search for My flock, but rather *the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock*; (Ezekiel 34:8).

Think About This

After a large crowd of followers had gathered to hear the words of Jesus, the Lord concluded His “Sermon on the Mount” with strict warnings about *false preachers* who would behave like predatory animals having an insatiable desire for money.

Damage From Dishonest Preachers

In Volume 1 ([Suppressing the Words of Christ](#)) of *Executed to Suppress His Message*, we saw how Jesus prohibited the use of money within His church. So rapacious 1st Century preachers needed a way to overcome the Lord's prohibitions against asking for and accepting money.

So when Paul began publishing epistles authorizing and promoting pastoral authority, dishonest preachers found precisely what they needed to demand money from the brethren. By emphasizing Paul's teachings and claiming that God had ordained them to positions of authority over the church, rapacious preachers were able to control what Christian assemblies were taught — which allowed them to suppress the Lord's prohibitions against using money within the Church, along with His warnings about false preachers who desired money from God's people.

Of course, some Christians will respond to what is written above by stating: "I wonder if you're making a big deal out of nothing? Everyone needs to make a living. And I don't see a good reason for not paying preachers."

So in response to such a question, I would ask these Christians to look at Revelation Chapter 3, where Jesus evaluated 1st Century Gentile Christians whom were following these money-hungry preachers that rose up after His death. You may be surprised to learn how much spiritual damage these preachers had inflicted on God's people:

"I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.

"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth."

"Because you say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,' and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of

your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.”

All of these Gentile congregations were located in the precise geographical areas where Paul preached and promoted his errant doctrine of pastoral authority. And especially notice how most of these Christians had rejected the Lord’s teachings and leadership, then placed their trust in the doctrines, rules and instructions of dishonest preachers who — according to Jesus — were seeking nothing but financial gain.

Then finally in Revelation 3:20, the Lord described how most of those whom were following these preachers had lost all desire to follow His teachings:

‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me (Revelation 3:20).

Think About This

These pastor-following Christians had moved so far away from Christ, they saw no need to even invite Him into their fellowships! Choosing to completely ignore the Lord’s instructions in [John 10:27](#), they actually *preferred* to hear and follow their self-appointed preachers, rather than the words of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A Warning to Modern Christians

These 1st Century Gentile churches provide a startling example of why Christians must reject the teachings of human preachers, and place their complete trust in the words of their Lord and Savior. As Jesus said in Matthew 28:19-20:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you ...

The Lord was very clear: the job of every disciple — whether they be an apostle, elder or a newly-baptized Christian — is to learn and then share precisely what their Lord and Savior taught and commanded. Christianity

has no place for the thoughts, ideas and doctrines of human beings.

So do your Christian beliefs come directly from the words of Jesus Christ? Or do they come from the leaders of church organizations?

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## 11 — The True Christian Shepherd

Now that we've seen the Lord's views on church authority, along with the apostles' perspectives on church leadership, let's return to the One True Shepherd and His pasture.

We've already seen how ancient shepherds did not feed their sheep; instead, they brought their animals to a pasture or field, where they found their own food.

Now let's add Psalm 95:7:

For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand ...

This Psalm reveals something vitally important: the spiritual pasture *belongs to God*. And this mean that God's pasture is not owned by a church; neither does it belong to the leadership within any such church.

Now let's read John 10:9, where Jesus adds something profound:

I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out *and find pasture*.

Here Jesus calls Himself "the door." And the Greek means *portal* or *entrance*. So the Lord said "He" is the portal or entrance ***through which*** His disciples find God's pasture.

We're quickly closing in on the true nature of God's spiritual pasture!

Now read John 6:63 (ASV):

It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing: *the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life*.

In our physical world, animal sheep eat grass to sustain their physical lives. But in the spiritual world, Christ's sheep require the spiritual food of *Christ's words*.

Do you remember what Jesus said in John 5:24?

Truly, truly, I say to you, *he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life*.

And finally, we need to add one more description of God's spiritual food:

... My teaching is not Mine, *but His who sent Me* (John 7:16).

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### **Think About This**

Just as sheep eat plants to stay alive, Christians require the nourishment of God the Father's words, which are passed down to us through a special "door" to the Father — a door that is the person of Jesus Christ, the "Spokesman of God" ([John 1:1](#)).

And since no one other than Jesus Christ is capable of acting as a portal to God the Father and His words, the Lord's teachings are by nature superior to and must always supersede human teachings — even those of an apostle.

*The thoughts and words of an apostle are not necessarily the thoughts and words of God.*

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12 — But What About Paul?

When it comes to the subject of pastoral authority, Paul's views are at odds with Jesus and the other apostles. But if we can put that specific problem aside, we can appreciate Paul's insight into many other areas of Christianity — insight the other apostles could not have, because they were not knowledgeable of Old Covenant theology.

When trying to understand the actions of Paul, we need to remember the nature of his formal education. Before he became a Christian, Paul was a practicing Pharisee. He was trained by Gamaliel, the grandson of the famous Rabbi Hillel. And by his own words he claimed to be “a Hebrew of Hebrews, born of a Hebrew; as to the Law, a Pharisee” (Philippians 3:5).

The Pharisees were strict and demanding about the observance of their spiritual codes — and they enacted heavy penalties upon those who broke the rules. For example, [John 8:3-5](#) discusses how the Pharisees were about to stone a woman to death for committing adultery. Then in [John 8:58-59](#), they tried to stone Jesus, simply because He claimed to exist before Abraham!

And so before Paul's conversion to Christianity, he actually persecuted Christians, with both [Acts 8:3](#) and [Acts 9:1-2](#) describing how he ravaged the church and dragged Christ's disciples off to prison.

The Roots of Paul's Education

The Pharisees viewed religion through the Covenant God made with Israel. So if we are to understand Paul's views and actions, we first must review the nature of God's Covenant with Israel.

God blessed Israel with everything a physical nation could possibly desire. He freed them from slavery in Egypt, gave the Israelites food from heaven, and protected them from their enemies. Then the Lord came down from heaven and personally spoke to the people, giving them perfect laws and civil regulations, sacrifices to atone for their sins, and the promise of physical blessings if they were obedient.

Yet even with all these blessings and promises, Israel's sins continued to

abound, seemingly without limit. As Christians, we know how Israel's problem was one of the heart: her people needed to be changed by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God did not offer them. Yet by withholding His Spirit from the Israelites, God demonstrated something of profound importance:

Even when a nation has a perfect God, who implements a perfect government that operates according to perfect rules and regulations — human nature cannot and will not change.

And it seems that Paul did not understand this fact.

The Progression of Paul's Ministry

Paul's ministry started when Jesus confronted and humbled him, causing him to repent of his Pharisaical ways. Thus in the early years of his ministry (50-53 CE), we find Paul writing to the brethren:

Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good (I Thessalonians 5:19-21).

Notice that pastoral authority is not even mentioned here. In the early years of Paul's ministry, he admonished Christians to "not despise" [Greek: *treat with contempt*] the inspired speaking of other Christians, regardless of whether or not they agreed with what was said. And instead of trying to regulate what Christians shared and preached, Paul promoted the idea that Christians have a personal responsibility to prove the spiritual information they hear from others.

Then just a few years later in 53-54 CE, we find Paul encouraging the Corinthian brethren to share their ideas on spiritual matters with the congregation:

*Let two or three prophets (inspired Christians) speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. *For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted* (I Corinthians 14:29-31).*

Then finally, notice what Paul wrote to the Roman Christians around 56-

57 CE:

I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are filled with goodness *and full of all the knowledge you need to be able to instruct each other* (Romans 15:14).

During the early years of his ministry, Paul had no problem with Christians speaking about whatever spiritual matters were on their mind. Furthermore, he encouraged God's people to decide for themselves what is truthful and good.

Paul Grows Tired of Rebellious Christians

But after many tedious years of starting up churches among the pagan populace, we find Paul establishing rules and regulations, just as God did with the Israelites. For example, around 64-65 CE (over a decade after he started his ministry), Paul commands Titus to "ordain" elders in every city. And notice Paul's motivation:

For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, *who must be silenced* (Titus 1:10-11).

Paul then went on to restrict what the brethren could give to widows, refused food to those who were not working, decided when married couples could divorce and remarry, prohibited women from speaking during worship services, and even commanded that certain people be cast out of the Church!

These commandments stand in stark contrast to the writings of the other apostles. And throughout the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, you will not find a single instance of these men commanding the brethren to do anything like Paul mandated.

Therefore, it seems that after a decade of preaching to rebellious Gentiles that came out of paganism, Paul drifted away from the Lord's practice of sharing God's ways by setting an example for others to follow. The Pharisees had strict regulations on what believers could do in both religious and civil life. And Paul was well-versed in these matters. So he must have concluded that such regulations would be beneficial to these

Gentile Christians. Paul was only human. And we can understand his frustration with Christians who had little desire to repent and follow Christ.

However, we should never forget how Paul's heavy-handed approach caused great harm to these Gentile Christians. And this should be a continual reminder of how our zeal to promote Christianity must always be tempered by the commandments, instructions and personal examples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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## 13 — Conclusion

Today there are thousands of Christian denominations, with each having their own unique views on the nature of God, prophecy, God's plan, how God judges, and who gets saved and punished.

However in John 14:23, our Lord and Savior said this:

*If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word.*

Jesus Christ most assuredly does not want Christians picking-and-choosing their own versions of Christian doctrine. Instead, the Lord strictly commanded His disciples to follow and obey *His* teachings.

God designed the Church so that Christ's sheep would feed upon the Father's doctrines, passed down through our Lord and Savior, and then on to us through the apostles. Yet modern Christianity — the Christianity we see and hear all around us — is based on spiritual feedings consisting of concepts and doctrines created by error-prone human beings. And even though every Christian in a Western nation has access to a Bible containing the teachings the Father gave through Christ, most *prefer* to follow the teachings of institutionalized churches — organizations that suppress much of Christ's message, so they can replace God the Father's doctrines with theological formulations created by flawed human beings.

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So let's summarize what we have learned:

- 1) Jesus raised-up one church — a single spiritual entity consisting of all born-again Christians possessing the Holy Spirit. Christ's Church is aware of no geographical boundaries, neither is it regulated or bound by human institutions or their leaders;
- 2) In the church owned and controlled by Jesus Christ, all Christians are equal brothers and sisters possessing no authority over their brethren. Older and more mature Christians (elders) are responsible for being examples to the Church. However, Jesus never gave the elders any authority over their brethren. Instead, the older brethren are to lead by their personal example;

3) In John 10:16, Jesus declared that His church has only one Shepherd (Pastor). And the Lord strongly admonished His followers to never forget how He is their only spiritual guide, teacher and leader. As He said in John 10:27, “*My sheep hear my voice ... and they follow me.*”

4) Jesus never gave any human being the authority to decide what His followers should believe. What a Christian believes is a private matter between a disciple and his or her Lord;

5) Every Christian has a sacred duty to share what they study and learn with their spiritual brothers and sisters, along with interested friends and neighbors. Furthermore, Jesus never gave any human being — *in any capacity* — the authority to limit or regulate the carrying out of this Christian obligation;

6) Christians are truly in God’s pasture, when they are free to learn, study, and discuss the teachings of Jesus Christ, as God inspires them through the Holy Spirit.

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### **Think About This**

The “pasture” containing the spiritual food required for eternal life is found among those who make Jesus Christ their only spiritual guide, teacher and leader:

Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you *and learn from Me*, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30).

And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me (Matthew 10:38).

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14 — Scripture References

[John 12:49](#) For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

[I John 2:27](#) As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

[John 21:16](#) He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

[Psalm 23:1-2](#) A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.

[Psalm 25:4-5](#) Make me know Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; For You I wait all the day.

[Psalm 31:1-3](#) In You, O LORD, I have taken refuge; Let me never be ashamed; In Your righteousness deliver me. Incline Your ear to me, rescue me quickly; Be to me a rock of strength, A stronghold to save me. For You are my rock and my fortress; For Your name's sake You will lead me and guide me.

[John 10:11](#) I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

[Matthew 20:25-27](#) But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. "It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave.

[Matthew 20:25-27](#) But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. "It is not this way among you, but whoever

wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave.

[John 10:16](#) I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.

[John 10:27](#) My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

[Matthew 28:19-20](#) Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

[I John 2:27](#) As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

[III John 1:9-11](#) I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.

[Matthew 23:8-10](#) But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. "Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ.

[II Peter 5:1-3](#) Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

[Luke 6:37](#) Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned.

[I Corinthians 4:16](#) Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me.

[I Corinthians 11:1](#) Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

[I Corinthians 4:15](#) For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.

[I Corinthians 12:28](#) And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.

[Ephesians 4:11-12](#) And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.

[I Timothy 3:1-7 \(KJV\)](#) This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

[Titus 1:5-9](#) For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

[II Thessalonians 3:10](#) For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.

[I Corinthians 14:-34](#) women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says.

[I Timothy 5:3-6](#) Honor widows who are widows indeed; but if any widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God. Now she who is a widow indeed and who has been left alone, has fixed her hope on God and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day. But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives.

[I Corinthians 7:10-15](#) But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife. But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.

[Luke 6:37](#) Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned.

[I Corinthians 5:1-5](#) It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst. For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our

Lord Jesus, I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (emphasis added by author).

[Matthew 18:15](#) If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

[1 Timothy 5:20](#) Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.

[Luke 9:49-50](#) John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us." But Jesus said to him, "Do not hinder him; for he who is not against you is for you."

[Titus 1:10-13](#) For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain. One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true. For this reason reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith.

[Titus 2:15](#) These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

[John 10:27](#) My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

[John 1:1](#) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

[John 8:3-5](#) The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. "Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?"

[John 8:58-59](#) Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.

[Acts 8:3](#) Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house,

and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

[Acts 9:1-2](#) Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

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