

What is the Government of God? I

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A lot of people claim that it is church government. If it is church government:

- What kind of government is church government?
- How should it be run?
- How should it be done?
- How does that affect each individual person within a congregation?

We live in a time when different people have been taken advantage of in extreme, excruciating, painful and sometimes very financially devastating ways, even to the pain of their own life.

We all know the whole account of Jim Jones and Jones Town, Guyana. When Jim Jones first started, he was noted because he was feeding the poor, helping those who needed help, and he was actually teaching out of the Bible. But a change took place with Jim Jones and his followers, and that change was most pronouncedly manifest when in a Bible study he said:

I am your teacher. I will tell you what God says. Furthermore, not only that, I will demonstrate that I have precedence over the Bible; I will stand on it. And if God does not strike me dead, then what I've told you is true.

They had that recorded on television. It may not be the exact words, but that is an overall review of what he said.

- What Jim Jones struck dead?
- Did people believe Him?
- Did people follow Him?
- Did people give up their homes?
- Did people give up their families?
- Did people follow Jones to the jungle in Guyana in Jones Town?
- Did they willingly take of the 'kool aid' laced with strychnine?
- *Yes! All in the name of God!*

I've also heard an extreme that was given by a man who said—and I'm going to make some references to the Worldwide Church of God, because many of the people who will be listening to or reading this sermon will have come out of or had been associated with the WCG. They had a government, a church hierarchy that got so extreme that it was even said that 'if you as a lay member were 95% correct and the leader of the Church—Herbert W. Armstrong at that particular time—were 95% wrong, that God would backup Mr.

Armstrong, and that you would be headed to the Lake of Fire.'

We've seen other extremes of church government where ministers command and order people to do things that are not contained in the Bible. We have found where church government has been abused—almost literally—to browbeat, to intimidate and to destroy the lives of people, *to hold them in fear!*

- Do you fear your minister?
- Have you been in fear of a minister?
- Have you been in fear of church government?
- Has it been that you have been intimidated by this kind of thing?
- Are you currently sitting in a church right now to where your conscience and the Holy Spirit of God is telling you what they are doing is wrong?

But because you believe a misapplied Scripture or Scriptures that God won't let the ministers do anything wrong, so therefore, we should trust the ministers, because after all they are in authority from God.

- Is that correct?
- Is that what you've been told?
- Do you believe that?

You're going to find that there have been an awful lot of things that you have been deceived about. Let's look at some of the things in the Bible concerning church authority. Let's look at some of things that have happened to the New Testament Church in the past.

This is very important for us to understand. Let's see what Jesus said the limits of the authority of the ministry and church hierarchy should be. I remember a time when Herbert W. Armstrong—who was supposed to be an apostle, but I would have to say that he was a self-appointed apostle; there was a time when he didn't claim to be an apostle—said, 'If there's one thing that the Catholic Church has right, it is that they have government from the top down.'

I remember thinking about that, after hearing that, and I went over that and prayed about it. The thought came into my mind:

- Why would God use a system and government that is like Satan's?
- Why would the Church of God use Satan's system of authority where the pope is sitting supreme?

When the pope sits in his chair and pronounces dogma, it is ‘ex-cathedra’—what he says is law! What he says is ‘the voice of God.’ What he says is to be followed and obeyed by everyone. Then right on down the line with the authority. I thought to myself:

- Why does God need that system?
- If God had that system, why then does He allow us to make choices and to make mistakes?
- If it’s all authoritarian, and if it’s all from the top down, then why does God allow choices?

Let’s begin with what Jesus said, and I think we’re going to find something very interesting. This little incident gives us an awful lot to learn from:

Matthew 20:20: “Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Him with her sons... [James and John, both of them were chosen to be original apostles with the other ten] ...worshiping Him and asking a certain thing from Him. And He said to her, ‘What do you desire?’ She said to Him, ‘Grant that these my two sons may sit one at Your right hand and one at *Your left hand* in Your kingdom” (vs 20-21).

Let’s think about this for just a minute. Here’s a mother trying to do a good deed. Here’s a mother trying to get the inside track with here two sons; a *political inside job* as it were, trying to get a governmental authority, a governmental seat—the two most important ones—for her sons.

- Would you say that there’s a little bit of human vanity in that?
- Would you say that there’s a little bit of desire that shouldn’t be?
- Would you say that this is not a misunderstanding of what Jesus was going to do, what He was representing?

We have to answer in the affirmative with every one of those questions.

Verse 22: “But Jesus answered *and* said, ‘You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and to be baptized *with* the baptism that I am baptized *with*?’ They said to Him, ‘We are able.’” So, they were desiring it.

But James and John did not want to have to come up to Jesus and ask that themselves, so they discussed it with their mother. ‘Mom, look, we know Jesus likes you and cares for you. If you just ask Him...’ And Jesus probably knew all about it.

Verse 23: “And He said to them, ‘You shall indeed drink of My cup, and shall be baptized *with* the baptism that I am baptized *with*; but to sit at My

right hand and at My left *hand is not Mine to give*, but *shall be given to those* for whom it has been prepared by My Father.’”

Let’s think about this for just a minute, also. Jesus was Lord, Master, the Son of God. Did He not have all authority and all power to do what He needed to do to get the job done that He needed to get done? *Yes, He did!* What did He say? *He said*, “...[It] is not Mine to give...” He’s also telling them that it’s not because of political things, not because of a family thing, not because of an inside track by anyone. He told them on the Passover night that ‘I’ve chosen you, you have not chosen Me.’

Verse 24: “And after hearing *this*, the ten were indignant against the two brothers....” Notice what inside politics does. It causes friction! And I can just say very categorically here right now, any time a church or congregation is run by politics, *who you know*:

- you’re going to have division
- you’re going to have dissension
- you’re going to have fights

Jesus began to answer them by giving them an object lesson, v 25: “But Jesus called them to *Him and* said, ‘You know that the rulers of the nations exercise lordship... [dominion] ...over them...’”—a dictatorial type thing, like the emperors and the dictators that we have known:

- Hitler
- Stalin
- Mussolini
- Mao tse Tung
- Castro
- Ortega

Whoever you want to name; they are dictators. What does a dictator do? *He gives edicts and his rule, and his word is law regardless of what anyone thinks!*

Jesus said that ‘the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion.’ They rule with a heavy hand.

“...and **the great ones** exercise authority over them” (v 25). Who are the great ones? Isn’t that what happens within a church? *Everyone looks to the minister! Everyone defers to the minister!* They take titles of ‘reverend, holy, mister’ and all this sort of thing. Look through the whole New Testament and I defy you find *Mr. Paul, Mr. Tarsus, Mr. James, Mr. John or Mr. Matthew*. It would only be wrong to call someone ‘elder’ but then they would do the same thing, and that becomes a sycophant-type of thing toward ministers.

The *great ones* we find in Acts 8. The great ones were the ‘religious leaders’ who exercised authority over them; who tell them ‘if you don’t do this, then you are going to hell. If you don’t do this

and follow this Catholic Church, then your soul is going to burn forever in hell'; that your life is going to be snuffed out because you didn't follow the pope. It got to such an extreme that they killed people for not following the pope.

We don't quite kill them today, we just disfellowship them, and there's been a total misuse of disfellowshipment, too.

Let's see a *great one* who gave us a warning, that was recorded so that we can understand from Matt. 20 exactly what this means, that the ministers within the Church of God are not going to take to themselves doing these kinds of things.

Acts 8:9: "But *there was* a certain man named Simon, who had from earlier times been practicing sorcery in the city and astounding the nation of Samaria, **proclaiming himself to be some great one**.... [notice what the people said]: ...To him they had all given heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, 'This man is the great power of God'" (vs 9-10).

Today we've had it: *This man is God's apostle!* All that was just a cloak to cover all of his miserable sins, same thing here.

What did Peter tell Simon [Magus]? You can read where he tried to *buy* an apostleship! Peter said, 'You be annihilated with your money! You don't have part or lot in this matter or this ministry!' We're going to see what kind of religious authority this developed into.

Matthew 20:26: "However, it shall not be this way among you... [the disciples] ...but whoever would become great among you, let him be your servant"—*one who serves!* The truth of the matter is that there is no greatness in any man worthy of any kind of recognition in such a way that he is a 'great whatever.' How can a man be great? Jesus said exactly how:

- you don't do it by self-proclamation
- you don't do it by self-exaltation
- you don't do it by exercising authority and fear over the flock of God

That is not the Government of God. If you have been subjected to that, then you've had the wrong kind of government brought upon you.

Verse 26: "However, it shall not be this way among you, but whoever would become great among you, let him be your servant, and whoever would be first among you, let him be your slave... [here is the example that we need to look to continuously]: ...just as the Son of man did not come to be served, **but to serve**, and to give His life *as* a ransom for many" (vs 26-28).

Who is the head of the Church? There used to be in WCG: God the Father, under Him Jesus Christ—they put a corporate structure with chain of authority—Herbert Armstrong, and then the evangelists, the pastors and it trickled on down where the member had to go through all of this to get to God. It even has been claimed that the only one to whom new doctrine would be revealed to be only the *man* in charge. That's not true! A lot of you have suffered from all that kind of thing.

Let's see some things about the improper conduct of ministers. I would have to say that looking at Ezek. 34 that every minister needs to ask himself... I heard a man preach these very same words who was supposed to be the 'leading' so-called minister in what is called the so-called 'Philadelphia' Church of God. He read these very Scriptures, yet, he disfellowships people right and left if they disagree with him. He says, 'You brethren who have left the Worldwide Church of God, and you brethren who do not accept Herbert W. Armstrong as the Elijah of God, you are going to have to give an account to Herbert W. Armstrong yourself at the resurrection.' I want to tell you:

- that is a lie
- that is heresy
- that is not true
- that is not Scriptural
- that is not right

By doing that, even in reading these same words in Ezek. 34, he's doing exactly what this says while he's reading those words! Just think on that for a minute.

How can a person or persons get so exalted in their own self-righteousness and vanity, from the appearance of what they are doing, that they can read the Word of God that condemns the very thing that they are doing and not even understand that they are condemning the very thing that they are doing? *That's incredible!*

Ezekiel 34:8: "'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food to every beast of the field because *there was* no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search *for* My flock, **but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock.**'"

We're going to tie that in with the Gospel of John in just a little bit. What is the key duty of anyone who is a minister? *You have to feed the flock!* How do you feed the flock?

There's something very interesting about a flock: *a flock cannot be driven.* Cattle you can herd them, *drive them*; there's such a thing as a cattle drive. But a flock cannot be driven. You can't get a group of men on horses and say go out here and herd

these sheep into a corral. *Never happen!* What you have is a sheep dog, a shepherd and you have the lead sheep with a bell and they will go wherever and follow and will do and accomplish.

But when the sheep are not fed or when the sheep are considered the ownership and property of the ministry—because of their governance over the people—then that is wrong!

Verse 9: “Therefore, O shepherds, hear the Word of the LORD. Thus says 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. Nor shall the shepherds feed themselves anymore; for I will deliver My flock from their mouth that they may not be food for them” (vs 9-10).

The flock of God belongs to Christ. I’m going to talk to ministers directly, very directly. I want you to ask yourself, and I hope you’re not offended from I said previously. I hope that if you have found yourself in a situation where you have been abusive to people, your church, your congregation...

I remember one time when I was in WCG that the Director of the Ministry was at that time Roderick C. Meredith. He said in his speech class, ‘All of you ministers once a year have to give an *attack* sermon. That was my second year in the ministry. So, I said, ‘I suppose so,’ and I gave an attack sermon. I tell you, it took me a whole year to win back the congregation. I attacked everything under the sun. All the sins and faults of the people, and all that sort of thing.

We need to say what sin is. We need to tell people what sin is. But attacking it is not going to accomplish anything.

James says that ‘the wrath of man does not accomplish the righteousness of God’ (James 1). That was the first *and last* attack sermon that I ever gave to a congregation. There are ministers out there who do that.

Jesus wanted to make an absolute lasting impression upon Peter. Of course, to all the apostles. This is what Christ tells every minister. This is what Jesus says to everyone who presumes to preach the Word of God. To anyone who would presume to lead people in the name of God.

John 21:15: “Therefore, when they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, *son* of Jonas, do you love Me more than these?’ *And* he said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord. You know that I love You.’....” The first word that Jesus used for *love* is from the Greek ‘*agape*.’

‘Do you love Me, Peter, with Godly love,

more than these?’ If that’s the case then there’s no room for politics at all, absolutely none! Peter was really not understanding what Jesus said, because he had to learn this lesson—and he did; he really learned it—said, “...Yes, Lord, You know that I love you....” this word for love is ‘*phileo*’ which means a *friendship love, a close brotherly love*.

“...He [Jesus] said to him [Peter], ‘Feed My lambs.’ He said to him again a second time, ‘Simon, *son* of Jonas, do you love [‘*agape*’] Me?’ *And* he said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord. You know that I love [‘*phileo*’] ...You.’ He said to him, ‘Shepherd My sheep.’ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, *son* of Jonas, do you love Me?’....” (vs 15-17). In this case, Jesus stepped down to level of Peter and used ‘*phileo*’: *are you loving Me?*

“...Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, ‘Do you love Me?’ *And* he said to Him, ‘Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed My sheep’” (v 17).

What is the sole job and duty of any minister anywhere under all circumstances in relationship to the people whom God has called. *Feed My sheep!* That’s what Jesus said.

We also need to understand that Jesus said, ‘No one can come to Me except the Father draw him.’ Who calls the people?

- I don’t care what sermon you may preach
- I don’t care what Scriptures you may read
- I don’t care how involved or uninvolved you may be
- Who does the calling? *God the Father!*
- In which way are we to lead them? *Jesus said that He was the Way, the Truth and the Life!*

Let’s see what else Jesus said about the shepherd. Church government and authority all breaks down when the ministers presume to take to themselves something God never gave them. That is to *rule over* the people, to abuse the people of God, to treat them like possessions. God never intended that kind of government to be. Absolutely never intended that kind of church structure to be. We’ll see what will be the proper one in a little bit.

Jesus said concerning Himself, concerning the way, John 10:1: “Truly, truly I say to you, the one who does not enter the sheepfold through the door, but climbs up some other way, that one is a thief and a robber.” That also applies also to church government and structure.

I call your attention to Rev. 2; let’s look at that. Let’s see exactly what the thief and the robber tries to do; what kind of government that they set

up—what kind of authority that they set up—and we will see what Jesus says about it. This is quite revealing, and we will see where it comes from. We will see that what I'm going to read to you is what has developed in the whole hierarchical structure of the Roman Catholic Church. When you really understand it, you will understand what an absolutely rotten thing that it is to say that the Church of God should have the same kind of hierarchical structure that the Catholic Church has. We're going to see that Jesus says that that's something *He hates*. We will see what that leads to.

Revelation 2:12: "And to the angel of the Church in Pergamos, write: 'These things says He Who has the sharp two-edged sword.'" That's really something to start out that way. In other words, whatever they are doing sets them up with a fight with God.

If you want to take that authority to yourself, you're going to find yourself fighting God. Do you want to fight God? Is that what you want to do? As a minister, we all have to ask ourselves:

- What is it that I'm really doing?

Down deep inside when you come before God on your knees in prayer:

- What is *really* that you are doing?
- Are you *really* feeding the flock?
- Are you *really* teaching the brethren?
- Are you *really* helping them to draw close to God?

or

- Do you have the organization as the paramount important thing that there is?

God could care less about organization. That's why the flock of God has been scattered, because of the wrong organization. He'll regroup it in the way the He wants.

Verse 13: "I know your works and where you dwell, where the throne of Satan *is...*" When you get too much satanic doctrine in, that's exactly what you get.

"...but you are holding fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you because you have there *those* who hold the **teaching of Balaam...**" (vs 13-14)—the pope at Pethor. This bring in that whole system.

"...who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication. Moreover, you also have *those* who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans..." (vs 14-15).

- *Nicolas* is the oppressor

- *laitans* are the people

The doctrine of the Nicolaitans is the oppression of the people from a religious seat of authority! That's what it is! You have there all the doctrines of the Nicolaitans, a hierarchical structure of Church government, which then is burdened upon the people.

Notice what Jesus said. "...**which thing I hate**" (v 15). Why? Why does God hate that? *Because when you put men in positions of absolute authority over other men, then you have a dictatorship and oppression!* Then you have it that the word of the minister is 'like the command of God!' If it isn't according to the Word of God, you don't have to do it. But because we've been told that 'to please God, we have to submit to the Government of God.'

I'll tell you right here right now, brethren, that kind of government *is not* the Government of God. That is the structure of Satan the devil, which has been superimposed upon the Church of God. Now you know why the Worldwide Church of God did not continue to exist, because God was not going to have it!

God says that He hates that, and hates that with any minister who would dare set himself up in a congregation and make himself the central focal point to exercise authority over people, to extort money from them—first, second, third and fourth tithes; however many you want to have.

One thing you have to understand: ***rule, authority and law will never convert anyone!*** What converts a person? *The Spirit of God!* That comes by repentance, by baptism, by humility and by choice. You can exercise authority and put people in fear and you can get them to do certain things. But unless they choose to do so, and unless you're showing them to follow Christ, *all that authority is just so much great self-vanity and ego!*

- I don't care if you have the best voice in the world
- I don't care how many radio stations you may be on
- I don't care how many TV stations they may be on

All you have to is look at the fall of Jimmy Swaggart, and then the other one Jim Baker. I mean, how many do we have to go down the line to really get the lesson ***that God hates that kind of thing!***

Christ says, v 16: "Repent! For if *you* do not ***repent, I will come to you quickly, and will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.***"

While you're preaching Christ, maybe Christ is against you, because you're not preaching

the *true Christ*. You're preaching *your version* of it, and you're preaching *your version* of authority.

- Are you ministering?
- Are you helping?
- Are you teaching the Word of God?

Then you can talk about authority!

Now let me tell you a little bit about our little church here, the Christian Biblical Church of God. We call ourselves *the no hassle church*. The reason we call ourselves *the no hassle church* is we don't have any hassles. The reason we don't have any hassles is because we're all trying to follow God. No one is trying to exercise authority over anyone.

On the other hand, there isn't heresy. There is not any of this wildness going on. Why? *Because the most important thing for any minister is to teach people to love God with all their heart, mind, soul and being*, and for a minister to do the same thing themselves. There can't be any other way. That is the true Government of God. Did not Jesus say, 'If you love Me, feed My flock.' He said it three times to make sure that it was understood.

John 10:2: "But the one who enters through the door is the shepherd of the sheep." That's something we really need to understand. Who is the Shepherd? *Jesus! Yes, He is!*

Verse 3: "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice..." If you are preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified, the grace of God and the love of God you're not preaching the voice of Christ.

"...and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out" (v 3).

- He doesn't drive them
- He doesn't intimidate them
- He doesn't beat them
- He doesn't cause them fear
- ***He leads them!***

Verse 4: "When he brings the sheep out, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger... [too many people have followed someone they shouldn't] ...for they will flee from him because they do not know the voice of strangers" (vs 4-5).

Verse 7: Therefore, Jesus again said to them, 'Truly, truly I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.'" Jesus is the top authority. What did Jesus do?

- He came to die!
- He came to serve!

- He came to give His very life as a ransom!
- He came to call the people He wants!

Then to have ministers turn around and use them as merchandize! That is not the Government of God by any stretch of the imagination!

(go to the next track)

Verse 8: "All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. ***If anyone enters through Me***, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and shall find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy...." (vs 8-10). I've been victimized by that! I've been victimized myself by those who are thieves and robbers:

- stealing authority
- taking money
- wanting to rule over
- wanting to take

And exactly what happens here: *the sheep don't hear that voice and don't follow him!* This is a clear lesson.

"...I have come so that they may have life, and may have *it* more abundantly. I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. But the one who is a hireling, and who is not *the* shepherd..." (vs 10-12). Even if you have your own congregation—if I can put it in that terminology, because no minister has his *his own* congregation—it belongs to God; the first lesson of any minister: ***the Church belongs to God!***

So, if you're looking for money, looking for prestige, looking for power, looking for recognition, *you've gone to the wrong place! You're a hireling!*

"...whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep, and flees. And the wolf seizes the sheep and scatters them. Now, the hireling flees because he is a hireling and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good Shepherd, and I know those who *are* Mine, and am known of those who *are* Mine. Just as the Father knows Me, I also know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep" (vs 12-15).

That's what Jesus has done; He's laid His life down for the sheep! That's what we need to realize, know, understand and really keep in mind!

Let's see some other Scriptures so we can see what happens when authority gets carried away. This surely happened in the Worldwide Church of God. Go back and look at it when they had zeal and it was the Radio Church of God, they were preaching that Christ was going to return soon, and they put out the booklet *1975 in Prophecy*, and we're all going to the place of safety in 1972, and all this sort of thing. Well, it never happened they way

they said. But what happened when it became evident that those things weren't going to work out that way? *Just exactly what we have here:*

Matthew 24:42: Watch, therefore, because you do not know in what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have been watching, and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore, you also be ready. For the Son of man is coming at a time that you do not think. **Who then is the faithful and wise servant...**" (vs 42-45).

- to feed the sheep
- to love Christ
- to love the brethren
- to do things in a way that is going to inspire the brethren

I need to ask every minister:

- since Jesus Christ died for our sins
- since His grace covers our lives
- since we are to help the brethren grow in grace and knowledge, and overcome

why is that so many ministers stand up and:

- instead of point the people to Christ
- instead of pointing them to love God the way that they ought to

all they do is harangue on their sins?

Everyone knows their sins! You know your sins, I know my sins; everybody in the Church knows their own sins *because the Spirit of God will convict them of it!* So, we don't need to harangue on the sins. ***We need to point people to Christ!*** We need to point them to Christ so they are going to repent. Your haranguing on sin is not going to make them repent; nor my haranguing on sin.

But if you constantly show people to love God, to repent, and that God is there Who is ready to forgive, willing to forgive, and that's the whole purpose of why Christ came, *that's the whole purpose!* Then we don't have this exercise in futility.

Verse 47: "Truly I say to you, he will set him over all his property. But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, 'My lord delays *his* coming,' And shall begin to beat *his* fellow servants..." (vs 47-49).

Take advantage of them, rule over them, misapply the Government of God. We're going to see two important things concerning the Government of God in just a little bit.

"...and to eat and drink with the drunken" (v 49). What is the greatest drunken binge that there is *spiritually?* *The false doctrines of Babylon!* The false doctrines of the 'Christianity' of this world, which so many people are embracing:

- the trinity
- a day and a half for three days and three nights
- Sunday-keeping

Can you believe that even in the Church of God Seventh-Day that there is a Sunday-keeping movement? They don't want to seem strange to their neighbors and relatives, so we want to have Church services on Sunday as well as on Sabbath 'so we can invite our neighbors in.' That's ***eating and drinking with the drunken!***

Here's what's going to happen; ties this in with Rev. 2 that we read earlier; v 50: "The lord of that servant will come in a day that he does not expect, and in an hour that he does not know. And he shall cut him asunder..." (vs 50-51)—with *His two-edged sword*, with which He is going to fight against any minister or church that exercises that control and authority over the brethren of God.

"...and shall appoint his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (v 51). Why?

Let's see the reason why; let's see how important the Church of God is to Christ and let's see what He did for it. He didn't create a church so that we can walking in as little Hitlers who rule over the 'zikehilers.' *No way! Not at all!* This is the Apostle Paul talking to the elders now:

Acts 20: "Take heed therefore, to yourselves... [watch out, be on guard against yourselves] ...and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers... [not overlords] ...to feed the Church of God..." Is that not consistent with what Jesus said? ***Feed the flock! If you love Me, feed the flock!*** Why?

"...**which He purchased with His own blood**" (v 28). So, when it gets right down to the misapplication of church government within a Church of God, what they are doing is turning their back upon and despising the sacrifice and the blood of Jesus Christ, because He ***purchased the Church with His blood!***

For everyone in the Church of God, wherever they are, they need to think on that. It's going to make some people mad, because there's a minister who said, 'I've been around Herbert Armstrong for 30 years and I know what is the way that it should be done.' The Word of God is worth more than all of Herbert Armstrong and what He taught. When He taught what was in the Bible, that's fine, but he had no corner on the market. The Truth of God is the *Truth of God* and it's always been in the Bible. It's there and it should be preached! If it isn't, like the Apostle Paul said, 'If I don't preach the Gospel *woe is me!*' That's just the way it is.

The Church of God was purchased by the very blood of Jesus Christ! So, if you love Jesus more, you're going to feed the sheep, you're going to feed the flock, and the flock are going to know. All the members are going to know, *because they're being fed!*

- they're growing in grace
- they're growing in knowledge
- they're growing closer to Jesus Christ and God the Father

Verse 29: "For I know this: that after my departure grievous wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock"—to take advantage, to take, to lute, steal, to exalt themselves in mini, little potentate offices.

Verse 30: "**And from among your own selves men will rise up speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves.**"

- Is that what's happened to many people?
Yes, it is!
- Have people been led astray? *Yes, indeed!*
- Are those who have been led astray responsible for being led astray by having someone lead them astray? *Yes, they are!*
- Who has the greatest responsibility?

Just like Jesus said when He was talking to Pilate, and Pilate wanted to know why Jesus was delivered to be crucified, '***They who delivered Me to you have the greater sin.***' Likewise, the minister who is doing this thing has a greater sin before God in doing it than the people who followed him. ***Because the minister ought to know better!***

Verse 30: "And from among your own selves men will rise up speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves. Watch, therefore, remembering that *for three years I ceased not to admonish each one night and day with tears*" (vs 30-31). Quite a situation!

Now we'll look at some other things and see what it is with the Government of God and how it should be and how it should be run. Let's see where the Government of God resides. The Government of God does not reside in the ministry; I will tell you that right now. That is a complete, total misapplication and misnomer. ***It does not reside in the ministry!***

Isaiah 9:6: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and **the government shall be upon His shoulders...**" *Nowhere do we find the statement in the New Testament whatsoever, under any circumstances at all that Jesus Christ subordinated that to the ministers! NOWHERE!*

The true Government of God in the New

Testament—the book of Jude—and that becomes very important. Here we have another brother of Jesus Christ. We know that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church (Eph. 1:22-23). *Christ is the Head!* Everyone is to point to Christ. It is not that Christ is the Head and then below we have all these other categories.

Let's see the true Government of God; let's see what that is and what we're talking about after comparing Sodom and Gomorrah and their destruction and what they were doing:

Jude 8: "In the same way also, these dreamers of filthy dreams are defiling the flesh, and **are declaring as invalid the Lordship of God, and are blaspheming the Divine powers.**"

This has been used many times that they despise government and speak evil of dignitaries; the true Government of God, this dominion. It really means that *the Lordship of Jesus Christ* in the individual's own life.

- Does not every person who is baptized have the Holy Spirit of God? *Yes! It comes from God the Father as a begetting!*
- Who is the Head of the Church? *Jesus Christ is!*
- Who is to rule over that person by God's Spirit? *Jesus is! To lead them!*
- What is the hope of every Christian?

Not the fear of corporate structure; not that they are there and there's going to be mass salvation because now you belong to this church or that church and you're submissive to the Government of God. 'God can't let anything go wrong.'

Listen! God allowed the Catholic Church. So, for anyone who says, 'God is in charge and nothing wrong is going to happen'; you're going right down the path, *because you are not allowing the Lordship of Jesus Christ in your life!* You're letting the Lordship of the substitute government coming from men into your life. Here's the whole hope of glory:

Colossians 1:27: "To whom God did will to make known what *are* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; **which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.**" That's the whole hope of life.

So, the whole dominion, the whole Government of God comes down to the Lordship of Christ in your life. And dare any man to take advantage of that and leverage that to himself! That is not the Government of God and if you've been victimized by it, you've been following the wrong way, just plain and simple. Now, it doesn't mean, on the other hand, that the brethren are to be mean and hateful and beat up on the minister either. That's not

to be that way.

Let's see what is absolutely important. The whole reason, the whole purpose for the ministry is stated in Eph. 4. too many times they zero in on verse 11 so they can get the structure of their titles and offices and all of that sort of thing to make themselves feel justified in the good that they're doing right with their dictatorship.

Ephesians 4:11: "And He gave some as apostles..." You don't appoint yourself as an apostle. It might an interesting study sometime to find out what the New Testament defines as an apostle. We are warned of false apostles who handle the Word of God deceitfully, claiming that they have the right way, but they don't. If they're not preaching according to this Word, there's no light in them; it's that simple.

"...and some prophets..." (v 11). Oh my, you have to be careful of that, because how many false prophets have gone around? I tell you, I could spend hours and hours just talking about that. I won't belabor the point.

"...and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers... [For what?] ...**for the perfecting of the saints...**" (vs 11-12). Feed the flock! 'Do you love Me?' Jesus asked. 'Feed My sheep! Feed My lambs!' ...**for the perfecting of the saints...**" How do you perfect the saints?

- Do you perfect them by correcting them for all their sins?
- Do you correct them by browbeating them?
- Do you correct them by making them pay one, two, three and four tithes?
- Do you perfect them in the flesh?

or

- Do you perfect them in the *spirit*?
- *They have to be perfected in the spirit!*

Christ *in* you! That's the whole sole absolute purpose of the ministry toward the brethren. Not to have a government and bureaucratic hierarchy that is used to expedite the goals of a corporate organization. Let God give the blessing and time to do what *He* wants! That's a lesson that everyone has to learn, and every minister needs to learn. Don't go running down the road and say, 'O God, I'm doing this great work for You, and because I'm doing this great work for you, by the way bless me in it.' Any minister who thinks he's doing the work of God better back up and ask: **Are they perfecting the saints?**

"...for *the* work of *the* ministry... [there's a lot of work] ...for *the* edifying of the Body of Christ" (v 12). Edifying is not ruling over. Edifying is not having a hierarchy over.

- edifying is *feeding*

- edifying is *up-building*
- edifying is *helping them draw closer to God*
- edifying is *to teach the brethren to really draw close to God*

I remember a minister came down with great authority; could he ever speak! He came down and said, 'Brethren, I want to give you 14 points on why your prayers aren't answered! I sat there and thought: WOW! He didn't even tell them once *how* their prayer could be answered. If you tell them how their prayers can be answered, then the 14 points of why they're not answered becomes not relevant at all. Do they? *No, they don't!* That's not perfecting the saints. That is not up-building and edifying them.

Part of the Passover Ceremony that we read is John 14 and 15. Part of the very words that Jesus Christ told His disciples before He went out and was arrested.

John 14:15: "If you love Me, keep the commandments—namely, My commandments." You don't teach people to keep the commandments because they're going into the Lake of Fire if they don't. You teach them to keep the commandments because they *love God!*

- that is feeding the flock
- that is edifying the Body of Christ
- that is how the Government of God should work

John 15:7: If you dwell in Me, and My words dwell in you..."—abiding/living in you; that's what it has to be. As ministers what should we dispense? Authority? *or* Should we dispense how to have the words of God living and abiding in the people? The answer is obvious:

Verse 7: "If you dwell in Me, and My words dwell in you, you shall ask whatever you desire, and it shall come to pass for you." That's how you get your prayers answered.

If a person comes to God in a truly repentant and humble attitude, seeking to do the will of God, wanting to love God, wanting to love Jesus, it becomes a really dastardly thing that ministers would take that kind authority to themselves and grind the faces of the brethren into the muck, mud and dirt and stomp all over them and take advantage of them. That is not so!

- For the perfecting of the saints!
- For the work of the ministry!
- For the edifying of the Body of Christ!

Ephesians 4:13: "**Until we all...**" I want you to understand, it's not saying 'till the brethren come...'; 'till the ministers come...'

I remember Herbert Armstrong said one time, ‘You know, brethren, I don’t think any of you are ever going to make it into the Kingdom of God; and I don’t know about some of these ministers over here.’

That is just a plain haughty self-serving dictatorial miscarriage statement, which is not true. Even the true Elijah—and there’s one man who is saying that Herbert Armstrong is Elijah... That isn’t true. All you have to do is compare the two lives. No comparison whatsoever! Armstrong was never the Elijah. Compare the true Elijah and he said, ‘God, I’m the only one left.’ God said, ‘No, I’ve got 7,000 that have not bowed the knee to Baal,’ and Elijah didn’t know anything about them.

So, how dare a minister come along and take that upon himself to say that. That is absolute nonsense! “**Until we all**...” The ministers are in the same boat. The ministers aren’t guaranteed to be in the Kingdom of God. But we *all* have to... What did Apostle Paul tell the Jews?

- you who have the form and word and knowledge of God and Truth (Rom. 2)
- you who teach the people they shouldn’t commit adultery
- you who teach them that they shouldn’t bow down to idols
- you who do the same thing

Don’t you teach yourselves?

And if you happen to be the only minister in your congregation, do you not let the Word of God teach you?

Verse 13: “**Until we all** come into the unity of the faith ... [notice the goal] ...and of the knowledge of the Son of God... [that’s what needs to be preached] ...unto a perfect man, **unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.**”

- that is how the Government of God is to be given.
- that is how the Government of God needs to be taught

Because that’s what the Bible says! We can go through all the things, the qualifications, for a minister, but I want you to understand something. Let’s see what the Apostle Peter said and see whether he learned the lesson.

I tell you one thing, the true Government of God is exercised in love, in patience and in understanding with the Spirit of God from Jesus Christ to each individual, to each minister. He had better preach

- Christ
- the grace of God
- the love of God

If he’s not, then he’s misusing the overseership that he has been given. So, a minister’s authority is really very slight indeed. His authority really is the Word of God. But to rule over people’s lives? *No! Christ is the One to rule over people’s lives!* To dictate to people what they should and should not do?

I talked to a man who said that ‘it’s a matter of salvation that a woman cannot enter into the Kingdom of God if she wears makeup.’ What are you going to do with Rahab? *Rahab the harlot is going to be in the Kingdom of God!* ‘Oh yes, but there was Jezebel, she had on makeup. We shouldn’t put it on because she had it on.’ Well, before she put on her makeup she also took a bath and put on perfume. Should we not take a bath?

You see, it’s because of the heart. If we teach people to have the right heart before God, because of Christ in them, you don’t have to worry about makeup. If they want to put a little on, they’re not going to make themselves look like clowns and fools. If they don’t want to wear any at all, that doesn’t make them anymore righteous than anybody else, *because it’s of the heart!*

Again, the same lesson comes through all the way, so if you want to know what kind of government that God has given to the Church, here it is:

1-Peter 5:1: “*The elders who are among you I exhort, even as a fellow elder...*” This is not a 21-year-old who has had hands laid on him and now he is what is called ‘the local’ elder or maybe even a ‘local, local, local elder.’ It has nothing to do with elders in the sense of an office. This has to do with older people who are elders, speaking with experience.

I can tell you know that I’ve learned a lot of things since I was 30-years-old. I can see right now that one of the greatest mistakes the WCG ever did was take high school graduates and put them into Ambassador College and send them out after four years and ordain them in the fifth or sixth year, and they’ve had absolutely no experience in life. They have had no knowledge or understanding on how to live. They haven’t even barely gotten ‘wet behind the ears,’ and were put in a position of a minor little dictator in their congregation. This has caused great harm! Great hurt! God is going to take account of that.

Rather than people giving account to Herbert Armstrong at the resurrection, Herbert Armstrong is going to give an account to Jesus Christ what he did with the flock of God.

“...and an eyewitness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that is about to be

revealed: Feed the flock of God *that is* among you...” (vs 1-2).

- Did Peter learn the lesson? *Yes, he did!*
- Did Peter love Jesus Christ? *Yes, he did!*
- Is Peter not teaching this to the ministers and people? *Yes, he is!*

“...exercising oversight not by compulsion...” (v 2). *Not to be forced!* Also, the ministry is not to exercise compulsory/obligatory things upon people. In the final analysis, if anyone does not want to do what God says, because they love God, can your authority do greater things than God? Can your depravation to them do anything greater than what God is going to do?

I mean, when we really put it in the perspective of what the Bible says, how far astray have the different churches and the Churches of God gotten because of the wrong kind of government? Rather than teaching the people that ***the true government is from Christ into you, to lead you, and together Christ leading all of us!*** Then we can do what God wants.

“...but willingly; not in fondness of dishonest gain...” (v 2)—because there’s going to be money involved. Whenever the minister starts setting his heart on the money, starts taking advantage of those things, ***your headed for a fall!*** It’s just going to happen.

There have been people who have been extorted from in the WCG who have given up to 30% of their income, and even more, and even when they themselves were nearly destitute. Even when they themselves had nothing to eat, the ministers ***ruled over them with an iron fist*** and said, ‘You tithe even if you have to borrow money.’ That’s a ministry for ‘filthy lucre.’ That is not God’s way!

Yes, people are to give, that’s true! But God doesn’t take what people do not have. God is not the ‘sheriff of Nottingham.’

“...but *with an eager attitude*; not as exercising lordship over *your* possessions...” (vs 2-3)—***God’s*** heritage. It’s interesting the way this is in the Greek. It means *do not lord it over the brethren as you would exercise lordship over possessions*. The people of God ***are the people of God!*** They’re not the possessions of the minister.

- he has no right to them
- they are not *his* flock
- they are not *his* church
- ***They belong to Jesus Christ!***

That has to be the restoration of the Government of God within the Churches of God; *it can’t be any other way!* Notice that it is God’s heritage.

“...but *by* being examples to the flock of

God. And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you shall receive an unfading, *eternal* crown of glory. In the same manner, *you* younger men be subject to *the* older men; and all *of you* be subject to one another, being clothed with humility because God sets Himself against *the* proud, but He gives grace to *the* humble” (vs 3-5).

- What happens?
- What happens when there’s not that love and humility?
- What happens when there’s arrogance in the minister and Government of God?
- ***Same thing that happens when there’s arrogancy among the brethren!***

God may let it go on for a while, but if you don’t humble yourself—like it says here:

Verse 6: “Be humbled, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that He may exalt you in *due* time.”

I just need to say right here, the mighty hand of God is not there to crush and to hurt. The mighty hand of God is not the authoritarian tongue of a minister. ***The mighty hand of God is the powerful hand of God***, that when you have humility toward God and repenting with all your heart, mind, soul and being before God, ***His mighty hand is going to lift you up!***

Verse 7: “Casting all your cares upon Him, because He cares for you.... [Look out! Right around the corner it says]: ...Be sober! Be vigilant! For your adversary *the* devil is prowling... [stalking] ...about as a roaring lion, seeking anyone he may devour” (vs 7-8).

What he likes to do is get all these ‘little lord Fauntleroy’s’ as ministers to exercise authority over the brethren. Oh yes, Satan can get his finger in there and disturb things that way.

Verse 9: “Whom resist, steadfast in the faith, knowing *that* the same afflictions are being fulfilled among your brethren who *are* in *the* world.”

So, that is how the Government of God ought to work. I’m going to close this with one of the places in the Bible, which is my favorite part in all of the Bible. The reason is because

- it is the goal
- this is where we are all headed
- this gives us the hope
- this give us the love
- this gives us what we need to constantly strive for
 - ✓ to lead
 - ✓ to feed
 - ✓ to serve

the brethren!

It can't be any other way! It's not going to be done by authority, because it says, 'If you be willing.'

- everyone has to make the choice to be willing
- every minister has to make the choice to be willing
- every person is going to come before the judgment seat of God

Ephesians 3:14: "For this cause... [here is what the Apostle Paul's ministry was directed to]: ...I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of Whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (vs 14-15).

If you want to understand something real clearly, not only is it the *flock of God*, but they also have the name of the Father *written in their hearts and minds* because of the begetting of the Holy Spirit!

Verse 16: "That He may grant you, according to the **riches of His glory**..." That's what it has to be, the riches of the glory of God, that we can teach all the brethren to come to this. That all the ministers and all the brethren, regardless of where the congregation is or who the minister is, this is where it needs to be. *It's not going to be a matter of:*

- how much money
- how many people
- how many radio stations
- how many television stations
- how long you've been in the ministry
- how many you have baptized

All of that is *nothing* if you don't accomplish what this is here.

"...to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man" (v 16). That's the whole goal, purpose and reason that God is doing what He is doing. He didn't give us a hierarchy and a bureaucracy. *NO!* But "...to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man."

Verse 17: "**That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.**" Now you know why Paul said, 'I preach Christ and Him crucified.'

Verse 18: "*And that being rooted and grounded in love...*"

- not authority
- not dictatorship
- not hierarchy
- not prestige

But "...being rooted and grounded in love..." where every minister can love God with all his heart, mind, soul and being. And that every one of the brethren, every member in the Church of God, can love God with their heart, mind, soul and being. I

tell you that the minister who

- drive away the people of God
- drive them away from keeping the Sabbath
- drive them away from serving God
- drive them to despair
- drive them to drink
- drive them to give up on God because of their own self-serving vanity and authority

I tell you, God is going to have words with you! If there are any brethren out there who have been hurt because of that, you can hear this and listen to this and come back to Christ.

- ***Don't let any man take your crown!***
- ***Don't let anyone exercise that over you!***

"...you may be fully able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the breadth and length and depth and height" (v 18). That's the whole purpose of it. Otherwise, we're just

- playing religion
- playing lordship
- playing authority

NO! There is so much in God's plan we can't have time for that. "...to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the breadth and length and depth and height."

Verse 19: "And to know the love of Christ, which surpasses *human* knowledge..." Any knowledge we know:

- that God loves you
- that the Father loves you
- that Christ loves you
- that we can love each other, love the brethren and feed the flock

Fantastic! That's what it needs to be! That's the *true Government of God* exercised in love! What kind of authority is that? ***The right kind of authority, which comes from God!***

"...so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (v 19). That's what it has to be; that's what the true Government of God really is all about. Let Christ dwell in you richly

- grow in that grace
- grow in that knowledge
- grow in that love of God

Let the true Government of God be exercised in your life by Jesus Christ Himself!

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*

Scriptural References:

- 1) Matthew 20:20-25
- 2) Acts 8:9-10
- 3) Matthew 20:26-28
- 4) Ezekiel 34:8-10
- 5) John 21:15-17
- 6) John 10:1
- 7) Revelation 2:12-16
- 8) John 10:2-5, 7-15
- 9) Matthew 24:42-45, 47-51
- 10) Acts 20:28-31
- 11) Isaiah 9:6
- 12) Jude 8
- 13) Colossians 1:27
- 14) Ephesians 4:11-12
- 15) John 14:15
- 16) John 15:7
- 17) Ephesians 4:13
- 18) 1 Peter 5:1-9
- 19) Ephesians 3:14-19

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- James 1
- Ephesians 1:22-23
- Romans 2

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