

## Weekly Blogs on Leadership

by Dr. Jay Zinn • 4/4/2016

### Week 5

#### God's Authority on Earth

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment upon themselves.

—Romans 13:1-2

All authority comes from God and is granted by God. Whether *civil*, *church*, or *household* authority—he authored it. We are charged by God to obey earthly authorities because they are extensions of his authority. In the *home*, children are required by God to obey their parents in the Lord while they're being sheltered and provided for by their parents (Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20). When they're adults, they'll have their own homes to be in charge of as an authority. In the *church*, God requires us to esteem, respect, and obey the authority he extends through spiritual leaders appointed by him to serve the flock and care for them (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, Hebrews 13:7, 17). In the *civil* arena, we are required by God to obey the laws of the land and submit to these governing authorities (Titus 3:1-2). By doing this in all three institutions—we'll bring glory to God as peacemakers, protecting the relationships attached to those governing bodies.

There is, however, a “qualification” for obedience to earthly authorities. Only God has *absolute* authority and no other. No extension of God's authority—within the three earthly institutes of authority—has the right to override his transcendental authority. Any demand, command, or law that violates or contradicts God's values, principles and truths, must be rejected and disobeyed. For example, a Christian could never submit to the authority of a theocratic religion like Islam, because it requires us to denounce Jesus as God, and submit to their Islamic god, Allah. Here are some biblical examples of this. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego could not obey the law of the king to kneel before his graven image (Daniel 3). This violated God's command to bow to no other god or its image (Exodus 20:1-6). The prophet, Daniel, couldn't submit to the law passed by king Darius to pray to no other god but himself for the next thirty days, or be thrown to the lions. Daniel prayed anyway (Daniel 6). The apostles, Peter and John, were arrested by religious authorities which commanded them to stop preaching in Jesus' name (Acts 4:1-22). They could not obey this because it contradicted Christ's command for them to preach, teach and heal in Jesus' name (John 15:14; Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-20).

Whenever earthly authority demands *absolute* authority—above our relationship and obedience to God—we lose *free*-will and forfeit our right to submit to authority on the foundation of love, esteem and respect. If any spiritual leader (called to serve, lead, feed, and care for God's people) abuses their authority by demanding obedience to anything that contradicts God's laws and principles, they make themselves a “god” above God. They fall into the error of manipulating and bending God's people to their will, rather than inspiring people towards the will of God. In so doing, they forfeit their role to lead or expect anyone to submit to their position of authority. Because they've made it about *their* authority—rather than God's authority—they make themselves a “rebel” against God's true and ultimate authority. This ends up with them being stripped of any authority at all, because most people wake up and stop following them.