

FOUNDATIONS
of
ADVENTIST
LEADERSHIP

A LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP

*Based on the Collected Papers
from the Leadership Symposium
General Conference Session*

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six



Leaders *and* Ecclesiastical Authority:

*Acceptance of
Authority—*

PART 1

Based on the Presentation by

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Session 6 will address *the* following questions:

1

What is the difference between “authority” and “power” as these apply to the church?

2

Why does God have supreme authority?

3

How does God use His power?

4

In what ways did Jesus use His power and authority?

5

Where does the authority of the church come from?

6

What is implied by the “entrusted” dimension of ecclesiastical authority?

7

What three entities cooperate in exercising ecclesiastical authority?

8

What is the role of Ellen White regarding church authority?

9

What functions does ecclesiastical authority serve in the church?

10

What do we mean by “delegated authority”? How

I. Introduction

One of the most difficult topics in developing the theological doctrine of the church (ecclesiology) is defining and establishing the nature, extent, and function of ecclesiastical authority.



Ecclesiastical Authority

Terms Defined

Ecclesiology: “theological doctrine relating to the church” (*Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*)

Ecclesiastical authority: the authority of the church

Power (dunamis):

- “being able,” “capacity’ in virtue of an ability ”
- *the capacity to carry something out*
- *usually associated with the ability to produce change*

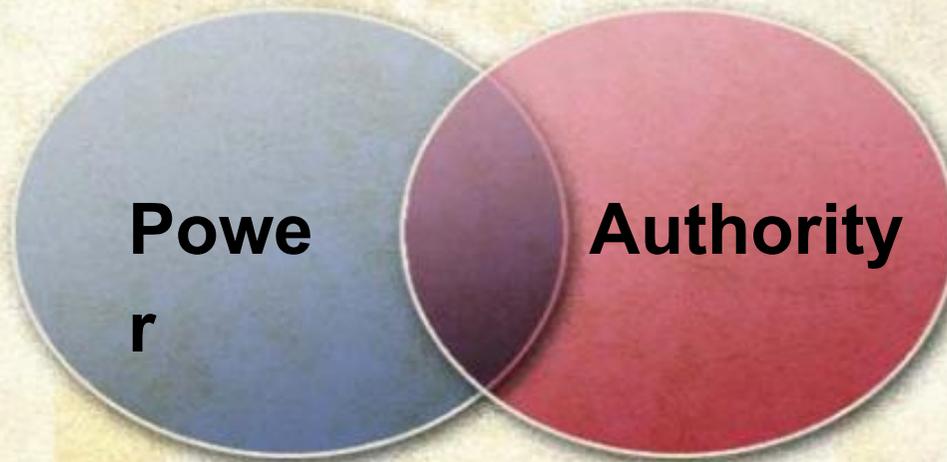
Authority: (exousia)

- *freedom; ability; power, authority*
- *emphasizes the right of a person to exercise power*

The Bible does not make a clear distinction between “authority” and “power.”

Here we use them as follows:

*the ability
to produce
change*

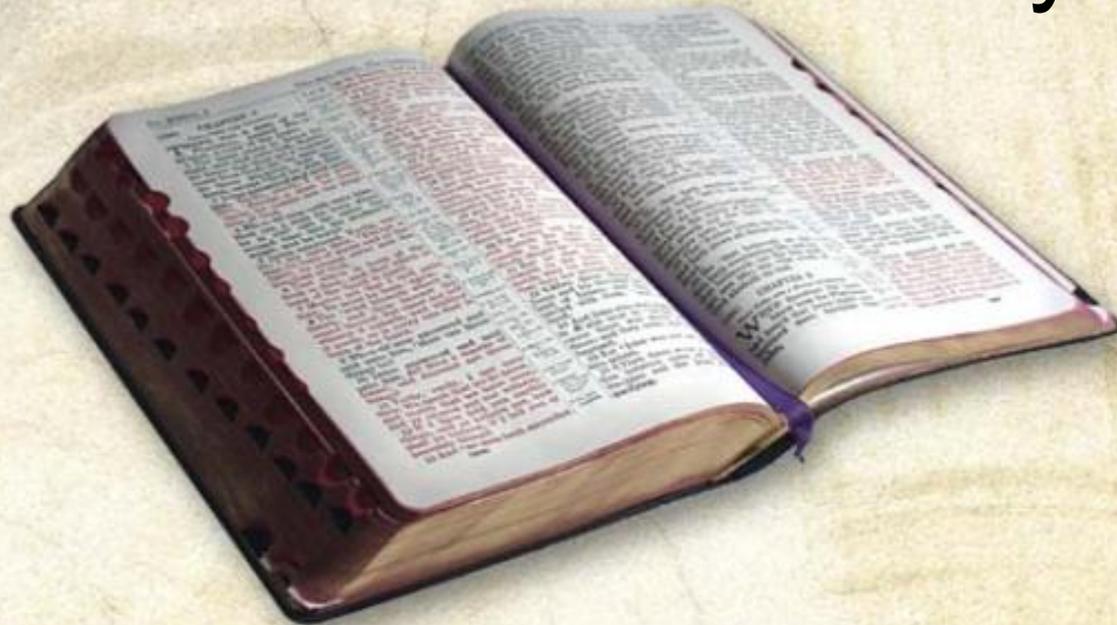


*the right to
exercise
power*

II. Searching *for a Model for Ecclesiastical Authority*

Where does supreme authority lie?

In Christian theology,
God has supreme authority.
Man has limited authority.



Reasons that God has supreme authority: He is Creator

¹⁷“Ah, Sovereign LORD, You have made the heavens and earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.”

Jer 32:17 (NIV)

²⁰For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made . . .

Rom 1:20 (NIV)

He is Redeemer

¹⁵“ . . . and I lay down
my life for the sheep.

. . .

¹⁸No one takes it
from me, but I lay it
down of my own
accord. I have
authority to lay it
down and authority
to take it up again...”

John 10:15,18 (NIV)

¹⁶I am not
ashamed of the
gospel, because it
is the power of
God for the
salvation of
everyone who
believes . . .

Rom 1:16 (NIV)

The will of the Creator and Redeemer

- *stands above any other will*
- *is to be recognized as supreme*

THE WILL OF GOD

The will of
civil governments

The will of
church leaders

God's authority and power are
part of His very nature.



GOD IS LOVE

AUTHORITY

POWER

LOVE

The authority and power of God

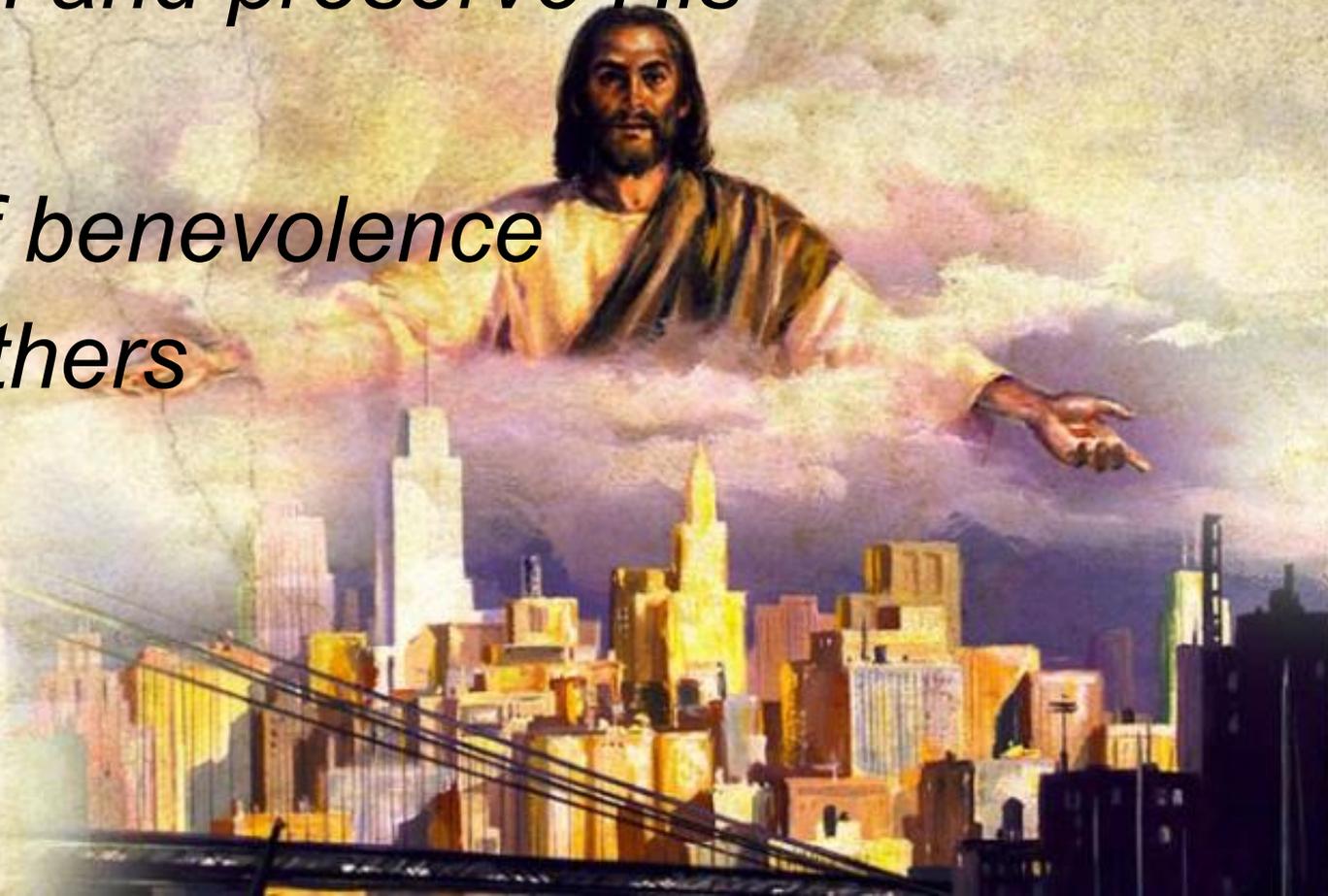
- *are exercised in love*
- *are constantly seeking the best for His creatures*
- *provide requirements to preserve the lives of His creatures.*
- *establish what is indispensable for us to enjoy.*
- *are not limiting.*
- *facilitate our self-realization.*
- *promote development of our potential.*

God does not use His authority and power as a despot

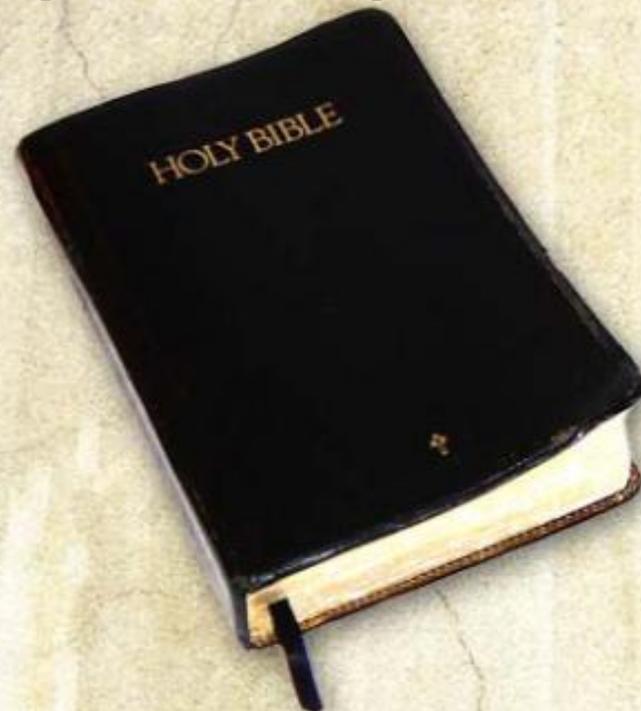
- *for self-satisfaction and self-aggrandizement*
- *to display selfish power or egotistical dominion over others*

Rather, He uses His authority
and power

- *to show His love*
- *to sustain and preserve His creation*
- *in acts of benevolence toward others*



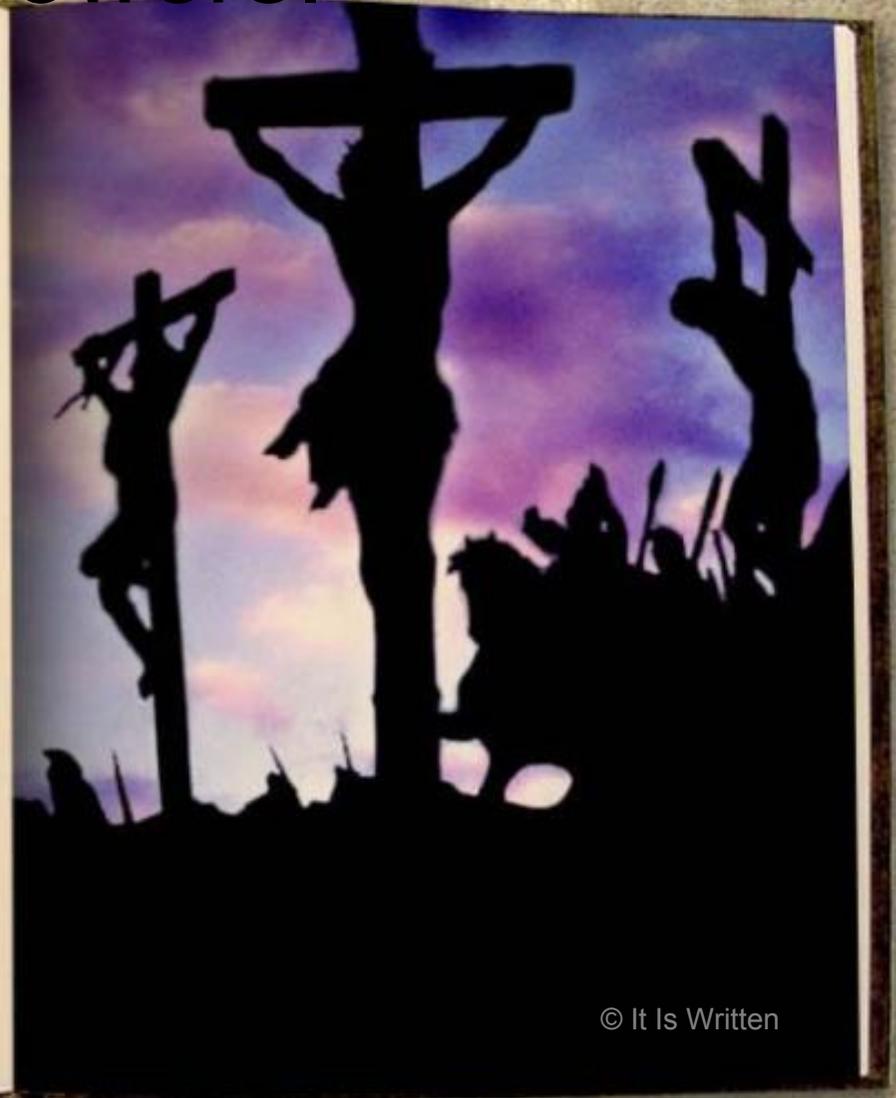
Because God's power is incorruptible and unique, Scripture does not acknowledge the existence of any other supreme power.



Other powers have enslaved humans, but Christ defeated those powers.

¹⁵And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Col 2:15 (NIV)



Because of the goodness of God's authority, we should submit to Him in worship and service.



God works for the welfare of others.

His authority sets limits to chaos and anarchy.

Intelligent creatures cannot enjoy life in chaos.

The authority of God opposes powers that

- *destroy development of the potential God gave us*
- *distort His character*

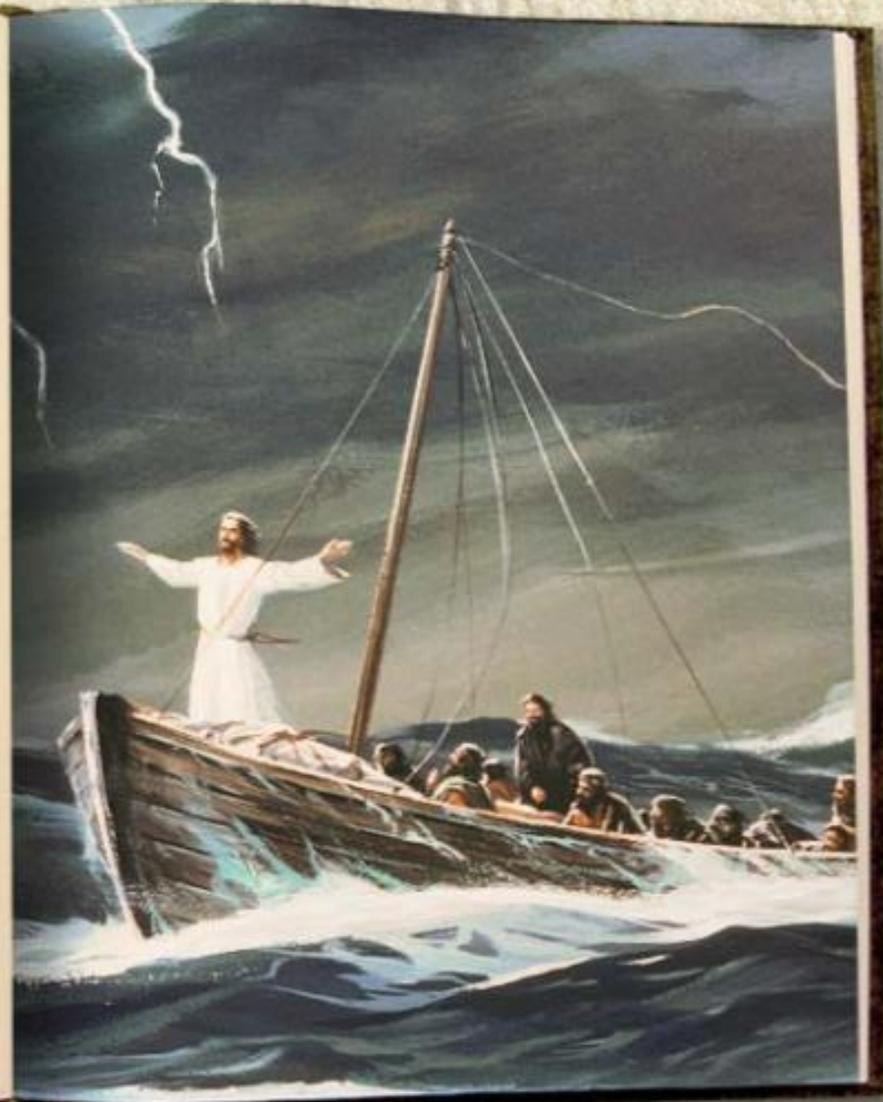
God's Authority Revealed *in the Life and Ministry of Jesus.*



He had authority over the destructive power of nature.

²⁶He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

²⁷The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”



He had power
over demons.



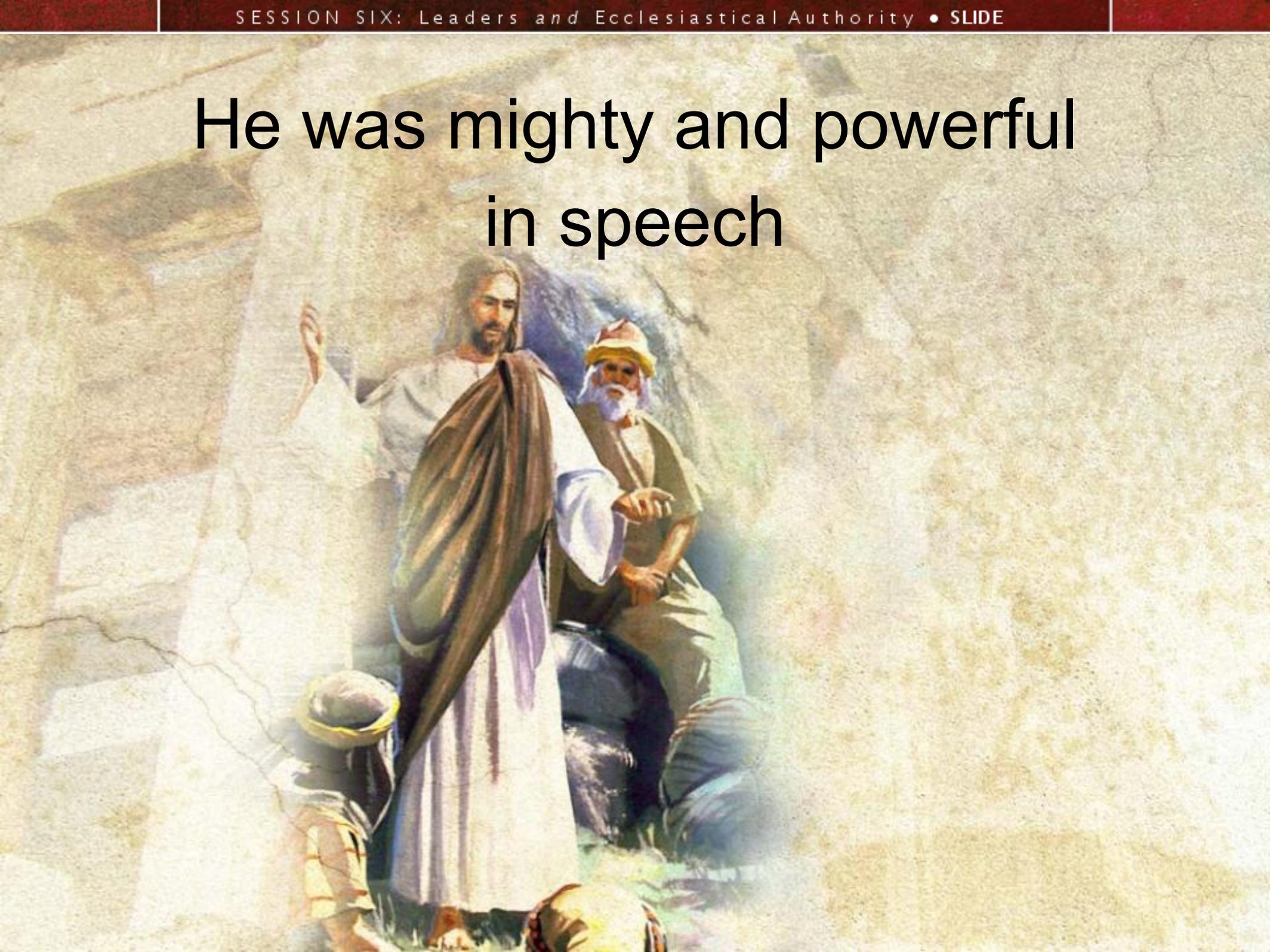
He had authority over sickness.



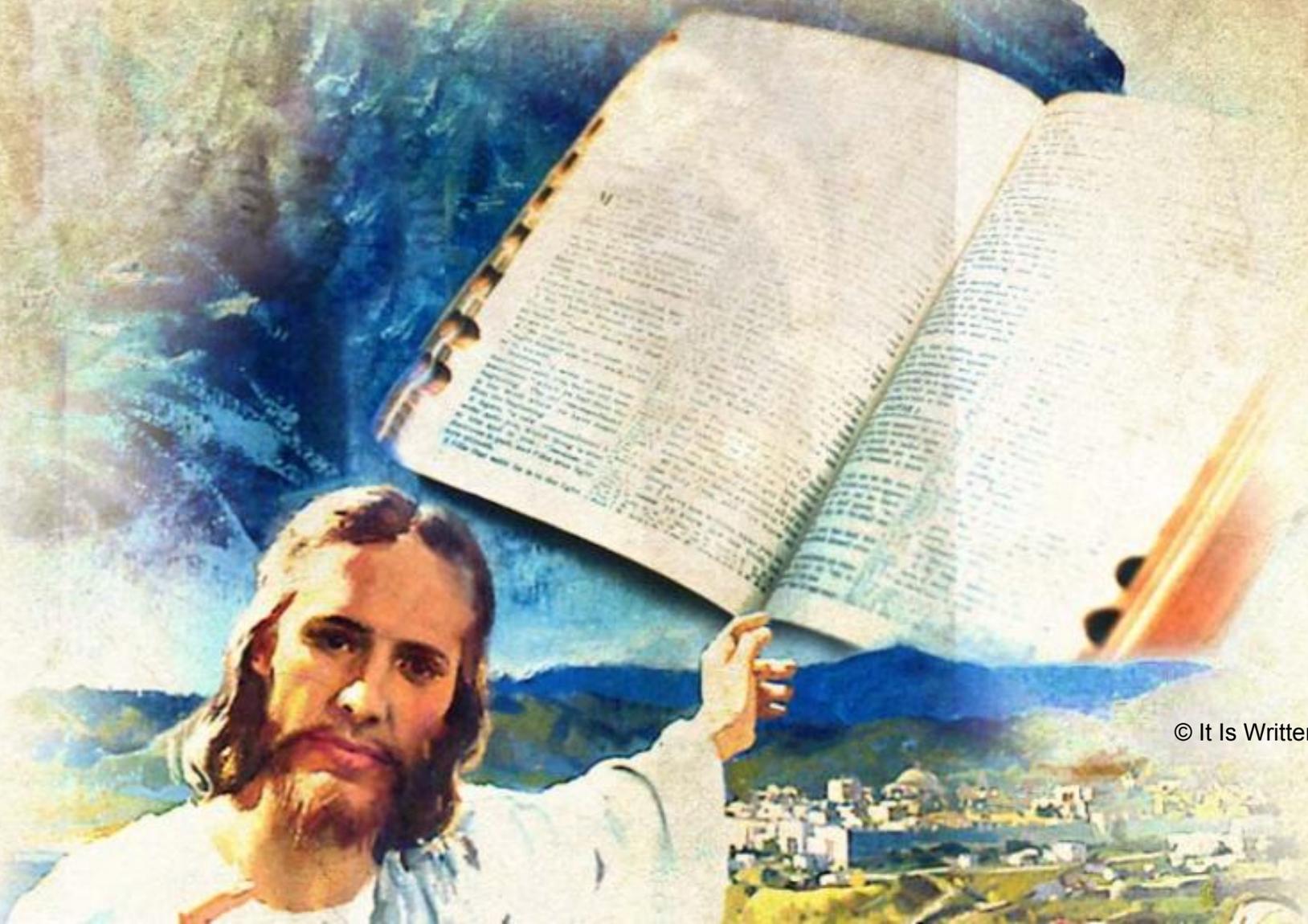
When Jesus used His authority to overcome those forces, He was

- *acting in behalf of human beings*
- *offering them the chance to submit to Him in freedom*
- *enabling them to become what God intended them to be*

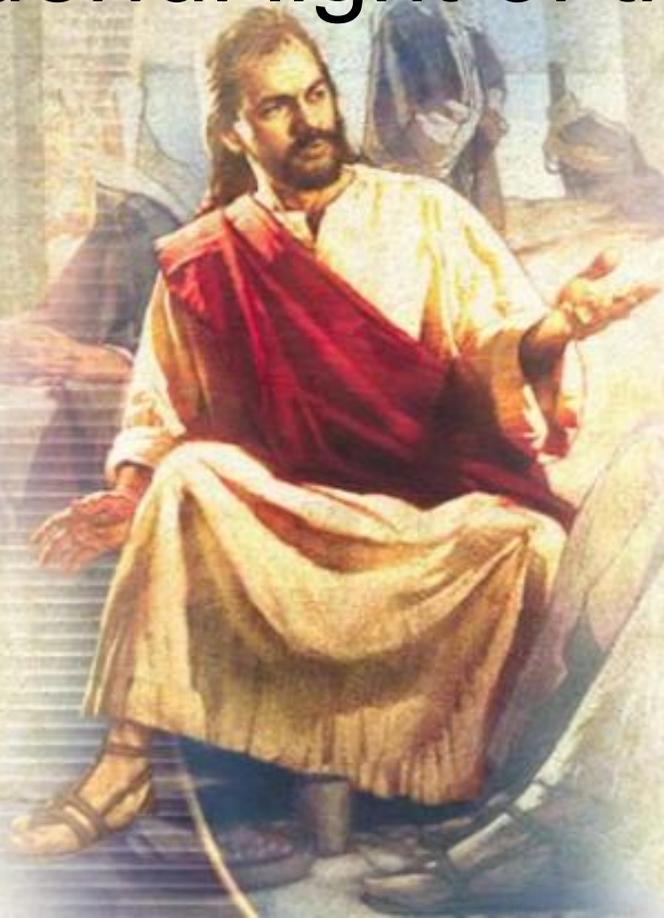
He was mighty and powerful
in speech



and in the interpretation of
the Scriptures.

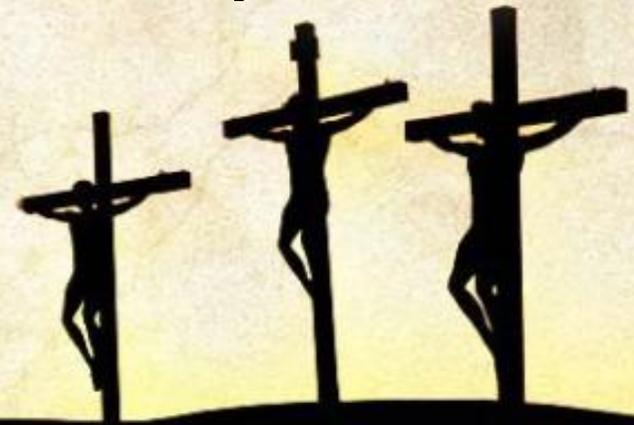


By His authority, He freed humans from the darkness of ignorance of God to the wonderful light of truth.



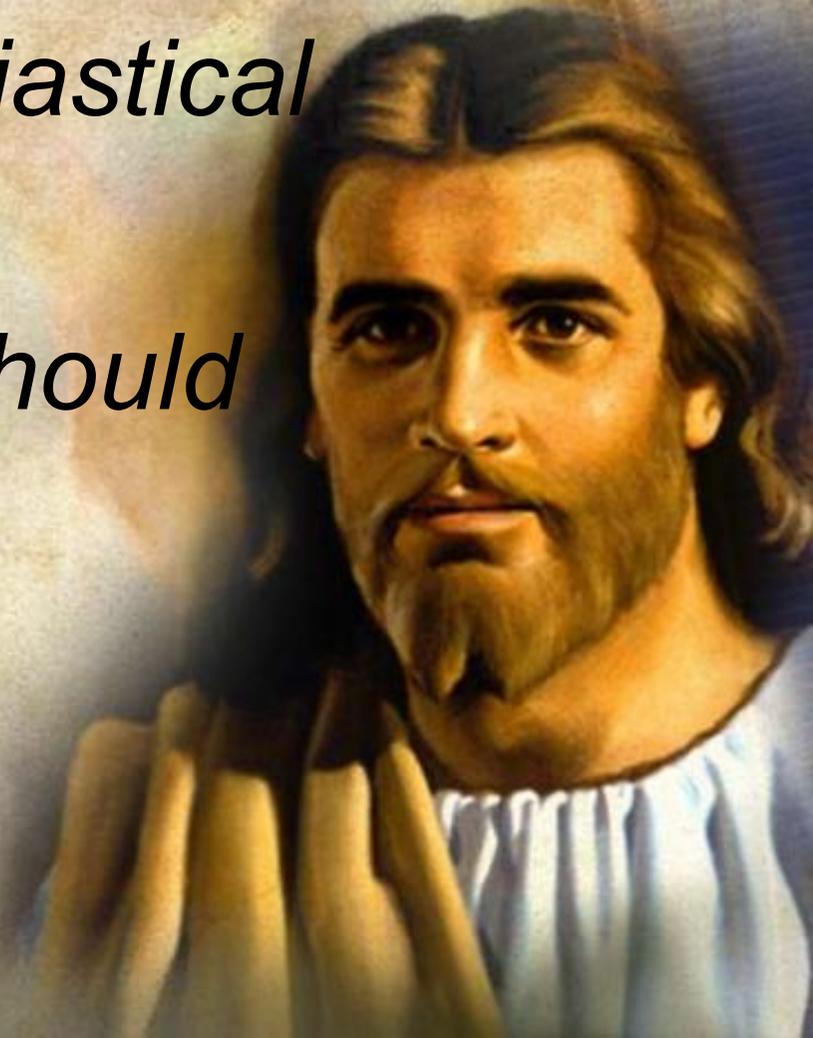
In a special way, Jesus' authority was shown in His freedom to give His life as a sacrifice for us.

“No one takes it [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.” (John 10:18 NIV)



Our understanding of the divine authority in the life of Christ helps us understand

- *the nature of ecclesiastical authority*
- *how that authority should be used*



III. Understanding *the Proper Use and the Limits of Ecclesiastical Authority*

A. Ecclesiastical Authority: Sources and Nature

The question of ecclesiastical authority—

- *its nature,*
- *how it is expressed,*
- *recognition of church authority, and*
- *subjection to it—*

is one of the most challenging issues the

Adventist Church faces

Ecclesiology is grounded in

- *the concept of authority*
- *its recognition in the life of the church*

Christ endowed His church with authority.

¹⁹“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

Matt 16:19 (NIV)



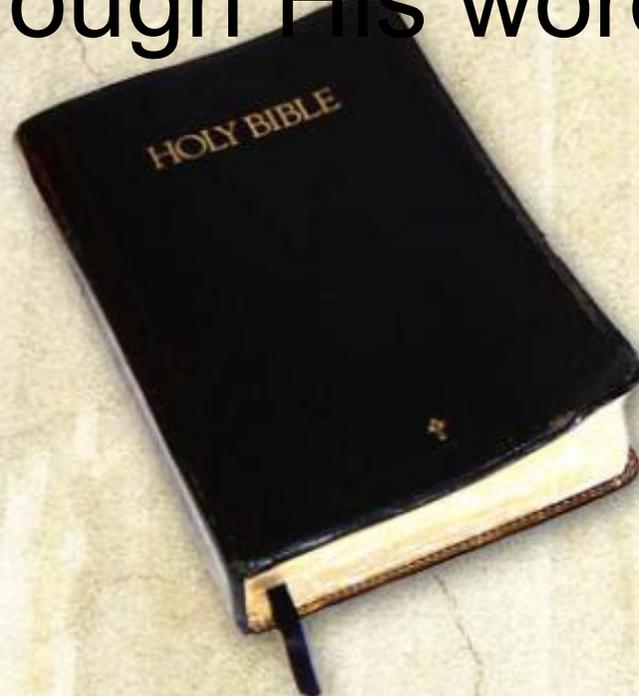
© It Is Written

The “entrusted” dimension of ecclesiastical authority

- *is of major importance in the community of believers.*
- *is directly related to the Lordship of Christ over the church.*
- *should not be arbitrarily restricted to a limited group of individuals.*
- *should be a basic consideration in any discussion of the nature of ecclesiastical authority.*

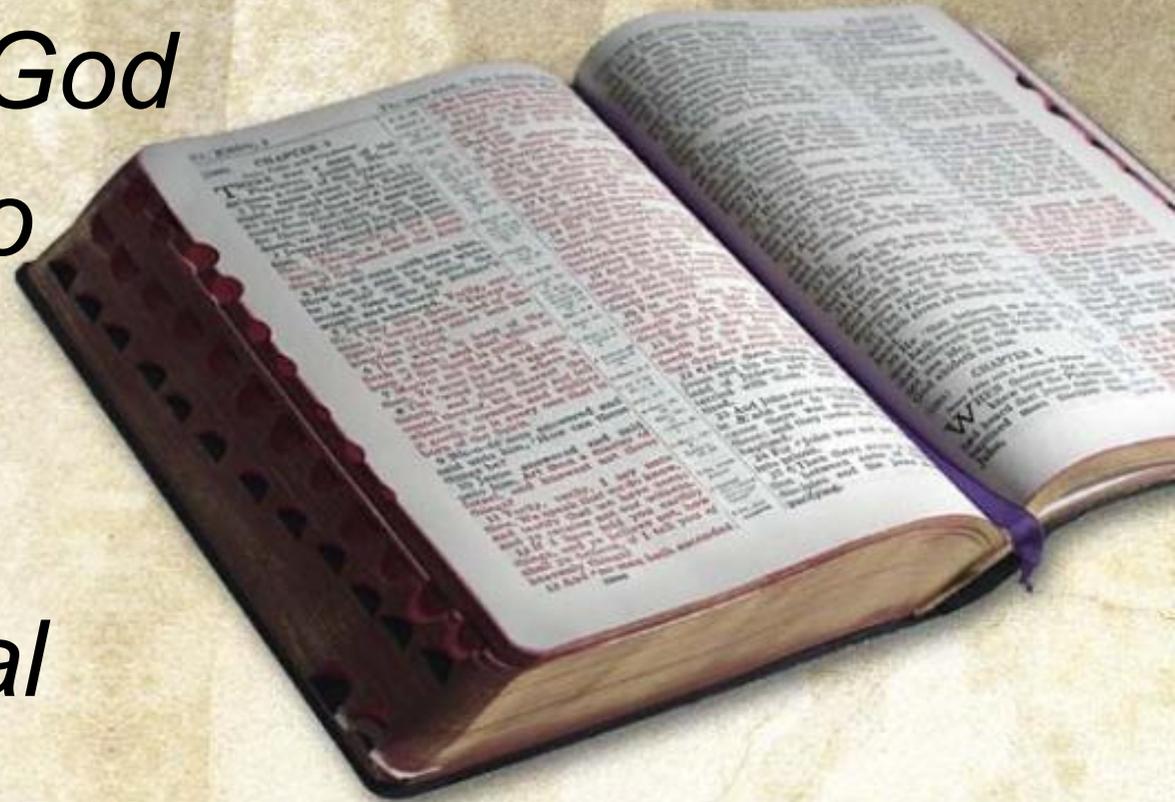
God's authority cannot be separated from its embodiment in the Bible.

He continues to reveal Himself through His word.



The Bible is

- *the objective record of the authority of God*
- *the source to define and understand ecclesiastical authority*



The role of the Spirit is relevant for the topic of church authority.

The authority of the Spirit is revealed through the message of Scripture.

Any claim of a manifestation of the Spirit is to be tested by the witness of Scripture.



The Spirit,
the Scripture,
the world community of believers
work together in the exercise
of ecclesiastical authority.

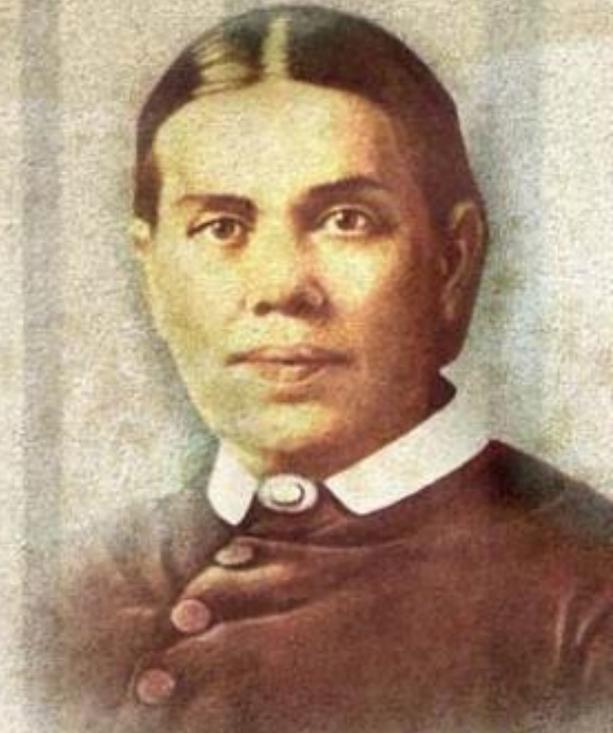


Ellen White's "writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested."

(Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists: 17)



While the Bible defines ecclesiastical authority and determines the role of that authority, the writings of Ellen White should be used to help us understand and illustrate the use of that authority in the life of the Adventist Church today



Scripture calls church members to submit to one another and to church leaders.

²¹Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Eph 5:21 (NIV)

¹⁷Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden . . .

Heb 13:17 (NIV)

When we obediently submit to others, we recognize

- *Christ as our Lord*
- *that He is Lord over the church*

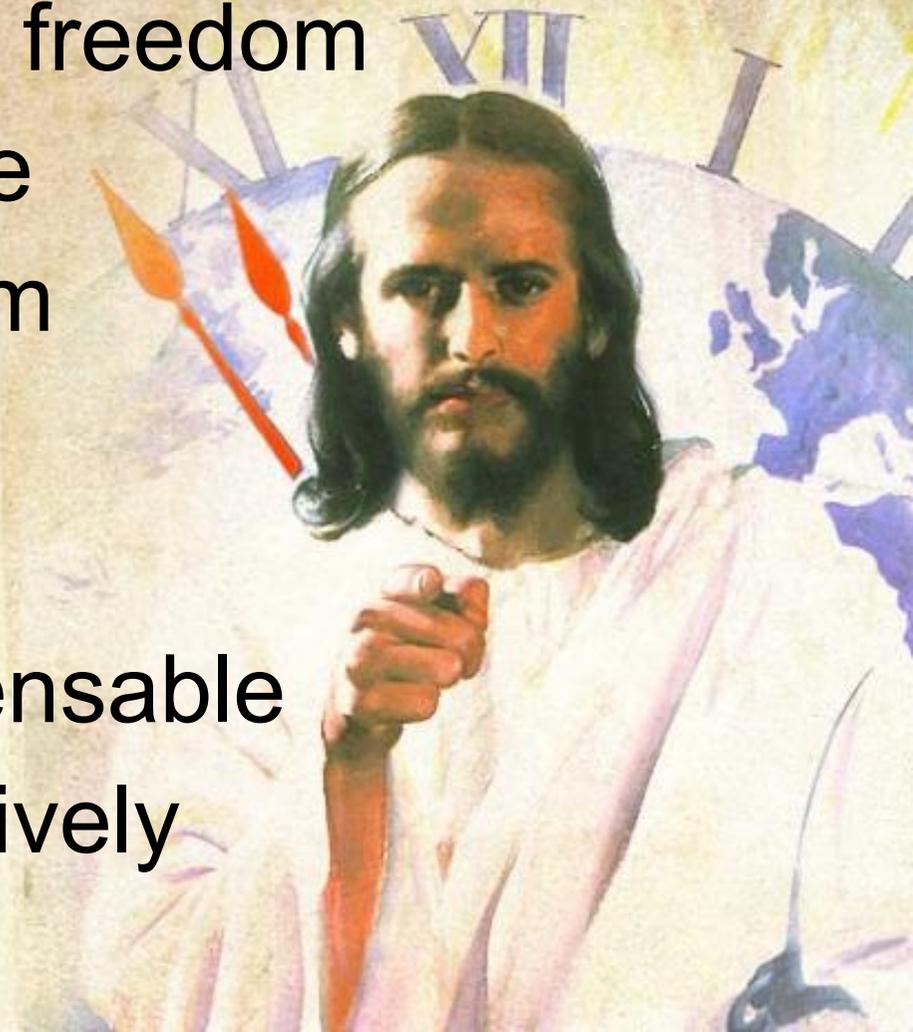
Ecclesiastical authority

- *is dependent on the authority of Christ within the church.*
- *defines and determines the church's message and mission.*
- *preserves the church in the midst*

B. Ecclesiastical Authority: Organization and Leadership

Church authority is the freedom granted by Christ to the church to work with Him in fulfilling *His* mission.

Organization is indispensable for the church to effectively use the authority the



Spiritual gifts help organize the church to build it up and enable it to fulfill its mission.

¹¹It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹²to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

¹³until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.
Eph 4:11-13 (NIV)

Members exercise church authority through delegates.

Delegates gather to make decisions on behalf of the whole church.

The Bible set the pattern for delegated authority in the early church in Acts 15.

These delegates are the appointed leaders of the church.

Appointed leaders should use their delegated authority to help the church to realize its mission.

The community of believers delegates authority, but does not surrender it.



World Church

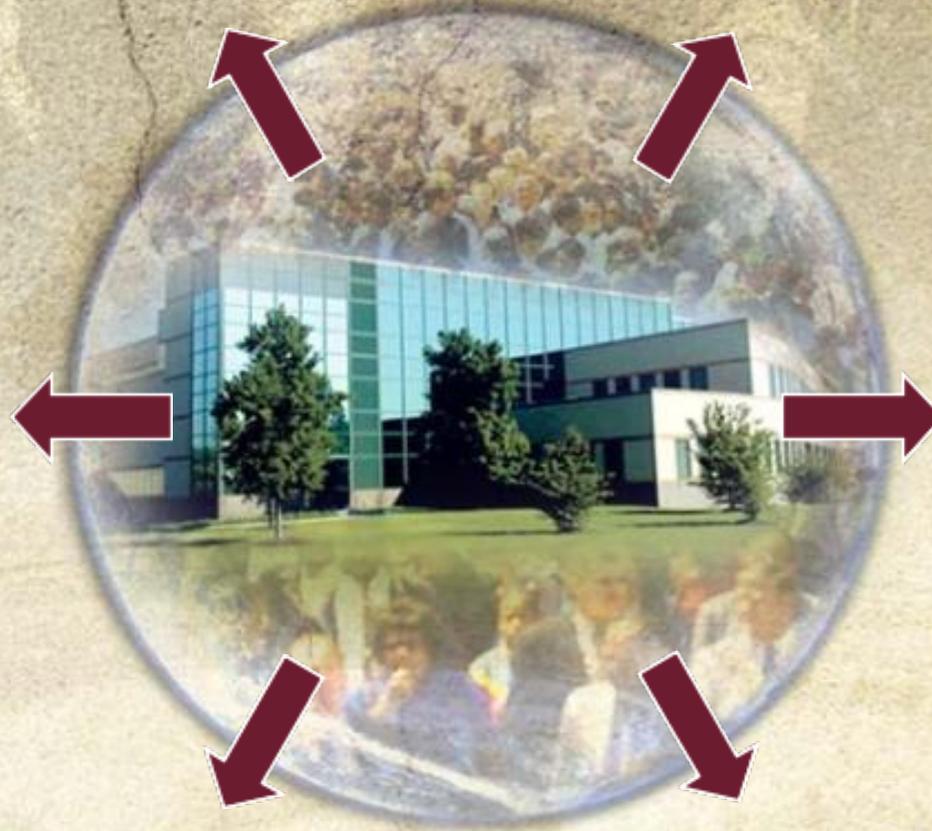
**delegated
authority**



**Appointed
Church Leaders**

The world church may withdraw this delegated authority.

Adventists see ecclesiastical authority as diffused throughout the world church.



It has been delegated to leaders in local fields and congregations.

The proper tendency among leaders is to work through consensus.

This takes place through study of Scripture and the work of the Spirit in leading the church into all truth.



Local congregations need to realize that they participate in the *fullness* of the church as long as they identify themselves with the

MESSAGE MISSION UNITY

of the global church.

This global perspective is essential for the proper function of the church.