

Lesson: Authority With Power

By What Authority? Who gave thee this authority?

Matthew 21:21 And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, **by what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority?**

John 7:16-17 Jesus answered them, and said, **My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.** If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

Alma example: *Mosiah 9:51* ...Alma, having authority from God, ordained priests;

Christ Has Both Authority and Power

Mark 1:20 And they were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

Luke 4:32 And they were astonished at his doctrine; for his words were with power.

Jesus demonstrated his calling by the exercise of spiritual power. Matthew says that he "went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom" and then he adds, significantly, that Jesus among the people." On another occasion he says that "men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"⁵ *Source: Authority and Spiritual Power, Edwards, F. Henry, 1956*

If Christ needed and has both Authority and Power – It follows that we need both as well

John 5:26-27 For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man.

Mosiah 9:51 And it came to pass that Alma, having authority from God, ordained priests;

Alma 3:3 I, Alma, having been consecrated by my father Alma, to be a high priest over the church of God, he having power and authority from God to do these things...

Two types of “Authority” — *POSITIONAL* and *FUNCTIONAL* — both are required to serve and offer effective ministry

New World Dictionary, rev. 1980

1. a) the power or right to give commands, enforce obedience, take action, or make final decisions; jurisdiction b) the position of one having such power
2. Such power as delegated to another; authorization 6.a) persons...having the power or right to enforce orders, laws, etc.

This type of authority can be referred to as “**Positional Authority**” or “**Legal Authority**”

POSITIONAL AUTHORITY – Having a Commission—

A Person has **Authority & Power to Act** by virtue of holding a **Position**.

Usually conferred by another, but may be assumed by someone. It usually involves the act of being “authorized”

Authorize –

1. To give official approval to or permission for
2. To give power or authority to; empower; commission (*New World Dictionary, rev. 1980*)

Priesthood Represents a Unique Type of Positional Authority

John 3:28 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

Romans 13:1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power in the church but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God.

So, what is the unique providence of priesthood authority? *“The right understanding of this question is this; **priesthood is delegated authority from God, and is given for a specific purpose, and while men are in the exercise of it within the province of this purpose, they are agents for him who has bestowed it; and whenever they transcend the province of that authority they cease to act for God.** Nor is it that which is inherent in the man by which everything that he does is qualifiedly of the Lord; and it is only when and so long as men speak with the direct recognition of him who has sent them and within the province of the delegated authority, that they speak as agents for God.”* Source: President Joseph Smith III. Supplement to *The Saints' Herald*. Lamoni, Iowa, July 22, 1893.

Aaron's Call – Example of Priesthood Positional Authority

Exodus 28:1 And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office,

Exodus 40:13 And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.

Numbers 18:7 Therefore thou and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest's office for every thing of the altar, and within the veil; and ye shall serve; I have given your priest's office unto you as a service of gift; and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.

- Consider the examples of Korah, Dathan, Abiram the 250 princess, the Beth-shemites, Uzzah, Uzziah or Saul who sought to function without authority from God

“No one can rightly assume to act in the offices of the priesthood until he is duly appointed by the great Author of the institution, and complies perfectly with the laws and usages governing such appointments” — **Source: *Presidency and Priesthood, Kelly, page 2***

“Authority” ands “Keys” are often interchanged in scripture

DC 104:8c The bishopric is the presidency of this priesthood, and holds **the keys or authority** of the same. No man has a legal right to this office, **to hold the keys of this priesthood**, except he be a literal descendant of Aaron.

Matthew 16:20 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.

Being “Commissioned”—having “Positional Authority” is Not Enough

Matthew 17:19-21 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, **Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief;** for, verily, I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. **Howbeit, this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.**

“A minister must be properly commissioned. But, if he is to minister effectively, he must also be an informed and good and wise and humble man. His ministry must have ‘moral weightiness.’”

*“The ministry of Jesus gives us the supreme example of this moral weightiness. Both Matthew and Mark tell us that the chief priests and elders came into the temple as Jesus was teaching and asked: “By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?” They had legitimate concern about the legal status of the Master. They wanted to know who vouched for him. But the common people went to the heart of the matter when they commented among themselves that “He taught them as one having authority, not as the scribes.” **His message carried conviction. It was, in fact, “the power of God unto salvation.” “Never man spake like this man.”** Dr. George A. Buttrick says that Jesus had an authority born of meditation and of love and of life and of the power of God. **“Source: Authority and Spiritual Power, Edwards, F. Henry, 1956***

Three important meanings of “Authority”

- the right to act, the right to govern, and the right to be heard.

- 1) “Authority in the sense of **the right to act** is of the type involved in performing a marriage ceremony, signing a legal document, or officiating at a baptism. This kind of authority depends primarily on the commission of the one acting. If his commission is not valid beyond all doubt, his right to act is in question.”
- 2) “Authority **to direct or to govern** is of the legal type possessed by the governor of a state, or the captain of a ship; or of the administrative type possessed by an apostle, stake president, or district president. This authority depends partly on commission and partly on ability. Those exercising it must have a clear right to do so. They must also have at least the minimum requirements in knowledge, training, experience, insight, and power demanded by their tasks.”
- 3) “Authority in the sense of **the right to proclaim and to be listened to** is the authority of the prophet, the doctor, and the teacher. We recognize it when we say that Dr. Jones is an authority, and mean that he knows what he is talking about in his field. His authority comes from his training, experience, and judgment. It arises from what he knows, what he is, and what he can do. Yet even here, where personal qualities are of primary importance, the commission is significant. It is a mark of official recognition and acceptance.” **Source: Authority and Spiritual Power, Edwards, F. Henry, 1956**

Functional Authority—Authority with Power

New World Dictionary, rev. 1980

7. A person with much knowledge or experience in some field, whose information or opinion is hence reliable; expert

8. Self-assurance and expertness that comes with experience

This type of authority can be referred to as “**Functional Authority**” or “**Authority with Power**”

Functional Authority, ABILITY to act;

Positional authority, RIGHT to act.

Combined—

Both are required to have ***SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY WITH POWER***

Examples of Priesthood Functional Authority

1 Corinthians 2:4 My preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of Power

Acts 6:8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people

Mormon 4:30 And he knoweth their faith, for in His name could they remove mountains, and in His name could they cause the earth to shake, and by the power of His word did they cause prisons to tumble to the earth

Moroni 7:35 And Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me, ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me.

“It is of the nature of authority that it shall be demonstrated in power.”

“In the field of religion, spiritual power is the clear and final evidence of divine commission. We may accept the authority of the minister officiating in the ordinances of the church on the basis of his commission. But if no spiritual gains accrue from obedience to the ordinances which he administers, then we lose confidence in both the minister and the ordinances. More dearly, perhaps, we tend to accept on the basis of their ordination those who are to direct the affairs of branches or districts. But after a time we reject and replace those whose record shows no evidence of power in action. And, to carry the principle yet further, we know in our hearts that the heralds of light and truth must demonstrate their calling. Their good news must be proclaimed with power, and in the Holy Ghost, and with heaven-sent assurance.” *Authority and Spiritual Power, Edwards, F. Henry, 1956*

“It is thus that his authority becomes real and effective...

“Priesthood relation established between Christ and the priest by ordination, as symbolized by the vine and its branches, carries authority to officiate in whatever work the Lord requires, according to the light and power the Lord supplies. Under the priesthood the Lord is obligated to give this light and power, or other needful blessing, subject to the servant’s worthiness; and the servant or priest has need to hold himself receptive and worthy, as also to wisely use such blessings when given. **It is thus that his authority becomes real and effective”...**”**When a man acting under divine priesthood speaks and acts in the line of his commission,** his words and works are authoritative and are the same force and effect as if Christ himself had spoken and done them. They carry to the hearers the responsibility of heeding and obeying, and they impose upon them the consequences of their decision, whether they accept and obey or disregard and reject; the one to blessing and life, and the other to condemnation and death.” *The Nature of Priesthood*, Charles Fry, pg. 6

When priesthood authority isn't there, the work of the Gospel is frustrated

Mosiah 9:176 And it came to pass that King Limhi and many of his people were desirous to be baptized, but **there was none in the land that had authority from God.**

Doctrine and Covenants 83:3c Therefore, in the ordinances thereof the power of godliness is manifest; **and without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh;** for without this, no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.

Spiritual Authority With Power

“In similar fashion, in the early days of the Restoration and of the Reorganization, **the divine calling of the elders was demonstrated in their evident spiritual authority.** This is what commended them to their generation, and to each other. They had moral authority derived from their persistent study of the Scriptures, their sacrificial devotion, and their pioneering spirit. But the necessary plus element, the thing that commended them, was their evident spiritual effectiveness. The Lord confirmed the work with signs following.

They were men of authority because they were men of spiritual power.” *Authority and Spiritual Power, Edwards, F. Henry, 1956*