

# Realms of Authority

## *Seeing Reality:*

**Ephesians 1:15-23**

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It is great to be with you all... and not to be outside filling my van with gas. On our vacation, I delayed buying gas at a lower price thinking I could find a better price. Three different times, I paid \$2.69 a gallon and then found it less nearby. I lacked some essential information. I wasn't seeing all of reality, and I was paying for it.

Our perspective of reality dominates what we do and experience, so we've opened the Bible to discover Jesus' perspective of reality. If Jesus is the Bread of Life as he claimed, then what is essential for us to see is revealed by Jesus. Jesus said:

***I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.*** (John 18:37, NIV)

***If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*** (John 8:31-32, NIV)

***I am the way and the truth and the life.*** (John 14:6, NIV)

Jesus is the window to the world, the revelation of reality. From what Jesus said and did, we have concluded so far that (1) reality like an iceberg is mostly beyond our vision, (2) we have difficulty seeing because of deception – not ignorance, and (3) we are served by angels who obey God and are opposed by angels who rebel. Our experience is dominated by this reality, and our actions must respond to it. How Jesus responded to it is amazing! It impressed everybody.

People were struck by how Jesus both spoke with and exercised authority. Matthew says:

***The crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority...*** (Matthew 7:28-29, NIV)

Mark says:

***The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching-and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him.” (Mark 1:27, NIV)***

The word *authority* appears 38 times in the four gospels. It means “the right to command.” It comes from the word *author* and speaks of the rights of the author. At root, *author* means originator or creator, not writer. Authority is the right to command or do something because you are the creator, or you have been given the right by the creator. If this world is merely the product of chance, then all authority and rights come by chance. Accidents are the work of chance. Disease is the work of chance. Nations are the work of chance. Elections and leadership are the work of chance. Life is the work of chance. However, if this world and reality itself are the work of one God, then all authority and rights come from that God. Thus, accidents, disease, nations, elections, leadership and life itself depend upon rights obtained from the Creator, or Author.

The book of Job opens with a picture, which many people think is allegory or literary convention, of a heavenly realm. Angels present themselves before God in Job 1:6; and Satan, the Accuser, is with them. Satan requests and is given the right to test Job in verse 12, but not personally do him physical harm. Angels present themselves again before God again in chapter 2, and Satan is among them. Satan gains the right to harm Job in verse 6, but not kill him. Is this allegory? Is this literary convention? Or does this Scripture unveil a heavenly realm that influences your life and mine? Consider Jesus’ words to Peter:

***Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers. (Luke 22:31-32, NIV)***

Satan obtains rights to test Peter just as we witness in the book of Job. There's more. Peter and the other believers will falter, but through repentance they will not fail. Jesus prayed that their faith would overcome the condemnation and scheme of Satan, so that they would turn back.

Obviously, Jesus believed in a heavenly realm that affects both external events and our inner thought life. He understood that none of this was by chance, but by rights or authority obtained from God. Jesus talks and acts consistent with the vision of reality painted in the first two chapters of Job. Indeed, Jesus speaks and acts according to the rights he has obtained from the author of reality. He speaks and acts with authority to implement God's desires.

When Jesus acts with authority, he says that the kingdom of God is near. He is saying that God's authority is being exercised and God's will is being implemented; and you are about to be affected. Jesus heals people and releases them from the grip of demons, and then says:

***If I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.*** (Luke 11:20-21, NASU)

God's will and authority are affecting you. Listen to what Jesus said to Peter:

***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.*** (Matthew 16:19, NIV)

The Greek terms for *bind* and *loose* actually mean to permit or bar. They are action words that exercise authority. This authority comes from Jesus who must obtain it from God the Father. How do we bind or bar things on earth? How do loose or permit things on earth? How does it affect what happens in heaven. Are we not once again seeing Job's picture? There is a heavenly realm that is affecting our external reality and our inner struggles. However, now we are given some keys that we can use on earth to affect what rights the angels obtain in heaven.

Do you realize that from the beginning, humanity was given the right to command this world? We were made in the image of God and given dominion and authority. God has never

taken that away from us. You, I and all humanity have been given authority over the earth from the Author of Life. God has not yet called all humanity to account or removed our authority.

The good and the bad, the believer and unbeliever all exercise authority given by God. Judgment Day is yet to come.

How then can anything happen on this earth that is not expressly invited or permitted by us human beings? There is only one way. It must come through the permission of God. Well, how? Well, first, it must not violate the authority God has given humanity, but respond to it; and second, it must be just because God is just. Thus, evil either happens through humanity's exercise of authority, or in righteous response to it. The Bible reveals that in just judgment God hands us over to the very powers we follow with our sin. The consequence of sin is enslavement or a hold of Satan on us. Satan gains a right to affect a part of our life through our sins and the sins of humanity. Job's suffering did not result from his own personal sins; however, his suffering was directly related to the sinfulness of humanity and the accusations that were rooted in that sinfulness. God never told Job why Satan had a "just" right to afflict him. Instead, God gave Job a glimpse of his incomprehensible power, generosity and wisdom and said, "Trust me."

God is worthy of such trust for he has acted to redeem us. The Bible teaches that redemption is freedom from that enslavement or hold. Jesus, who did not sin, suffered as a human being because of our sins. In his perfect obedience to God, he became our redeemer.

Listen to Paul's explanation:

***You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all our sins. He canceled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross. In this way, God disarmed the evil rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross of Christ. (Colossians 2:13-15, NLT)***

Through the cross Jesus removed the right of our celestial enemies to use our sins against us. He disarmed them in the heavenly realm. Listen to the Apostle Paul's words in Ephesians:

***Praise be to the God... who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*** (Ephesians 1:3-4, NIV)

***I pray also that... you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.*** (Ephesians 1:18-22, NIV)

***God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus*** (Ephesians 2:6, NIV)

***His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms*** (Ephesians 3:10, NIV)

***Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms*** (Ephesians 6:12, NIV)

None of what Paul writes or what Jesus says makes sense unless the picture in the first two chapters of Job are real and dominate our experience in this world. Furthermore, since God created humanity in his own image, we are not evil. In contrast, the Tempter without external influence rejected a pure and holy God and thus is the evil one. The Bible identifies him as such. We've become evildoers under the influence of the Tempter. Through our sin we become both slaves and victims of the evil one. As a result, everything under our influence suffers.

Despite our sin and evil doing, God acted in amazing love to redeem us and make us partners in his redemption. Jesus emphasized two keys: repentance and faith. These keys are the way to begin a life-giving relationship with Jesus. They disarm our enemies in the heavenly realm so that God is just in forgiving and blessing us. They are also keys for believers. As we

repent from things in our personal lives, in our families, churches, communities, nations and world that are not aligned with God's word and will, and as we seek Christ's forgiveness for those specific things, we change what happens in heaven and on earth. We destroy the rights of Satan to dominate God's earth. We say "no" on earth, and it becomes "no" in heaven. Thus we become priests in this world, reconciling people to God, freeing them from Satan's schemes and power, removing God's judgment and bringing God's blessing and will to the earth. All of that unfolds as we walk in repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

So are you walking with Jesus? Do you know the joy of forgiveness? Is your life changing for the better? Are you seeing Christ work in your family, job, church, community, nation and world? You have been given amazing authority. What will you do?