



BINDING AND LOOSING SPIRITS

POSITION PAPER

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One of the principles of the kingdom taught in Scripture is the binding and loosing of spirits.

The binding of spirits is the exercise of jurisdictional authority and power given by the Lord Jesus Christ to His Church in order to restrict, restrain, prohibit, or prevent the activity, influence and control of a spirit. The loosing of a spirit is the exercise of jurisdictional authority given by the Lord Jesus Christ to His Church in order to release the working of and/or to set free from the activity, influence and control of a spirit.

This is based upon:

- (1) The example of the Lord Jesus Christ to bind and loose spirits, which is to be followed by His Church.
- (2) The delegation of authority by the Lord Jesus Christ to His Church to bind and loose spirits.

I. THE USE OF “BIND” AND “LOOSE” IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

“Bind” and “loose” are corresponding and complementary terms. We see this in how Jesus uses these words. On two different occasions He declared, “*Whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven*” (Matthew 16:19; 18:18). In both of these statements, Jesus used the terms “*bind*” and “*loose*” to correspond and relate to each other as well as to complement and counteract the other. In the New Testament, these terms are used to describe and identify activity in both the physical and spiritual realms of life.

The Greek word translated “*bind*” is “*deo*” and means “to bind, tie, fasten, wrap, join” and thus also has the connotation and meaning of “to obligate, require, compel.” It is used in the New Testament most often to identify the physical binding, fastening or tying together of persons or physical objects. Jesus used it in the parable of the Wheat and Tares when the landowner says to his slaves, “*Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn*” (Matthew 13:30). It is used to describe John the Baptist being imprisoned, “*For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip*” (Matthew 14:3; also Mark 6:17). It is used to describe what happened to Jesus when He was arrested and taken to trial, “*and they bound Him, and led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate the governor.*” (Matthew 27:2; also Mark 15:1). In a number of places in the New Testament “*deo*” describes the use of something physical such as a chain, rope, grave clothes or a prison to restrict, restrain, prohibit, or prevent the activity and influence of something, whether it is a person (Matthew 22:13; Mark 5:3, 4; John 11:44; 18:12, 24; 19:40 Acts 9:2, 14, 21; 12:6; 21:11; 22:5, 29; 24:27; Colossians 4:3;) or an animal (Matthew 21:2; Mark 11:2, 4; 15:7; Luke 19:30).

“Binding” is also used to speak of activity in the spiritual realm of life. It identifies the reality of the covenant relationship and obligation of a man and woman who are united in marriage: “*For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living*” (Romans 7:2, see also 1 Corinthians 7:27, 39). It is used to identify the covenantal relationship and obligation of the people of God under the Old Covenant: “*But now we*

have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.” (Romans 7:6). In speaking to the Pharisees who were the spiritual leaders responsible for the people of God, Jesus used it to identify their authoritative teaching that sets forth obligations that the people are to obey saying, “*They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger*” (Matthew 23:4). Paul used it in reference to the proclamation of the gospel which, in contrast to him being physically imprisoned, is not restrained: “*the word of God is not imprisoned*” (2 Timothy 2:9). And Paul used it to describe his sense of being compelled to go to Jerusalem, “*And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there*” (Acts 20:22).

Most significantly, the word “deo” is used specifically in regard to the activity of spirits and of Satan himself. In defense of his ministry of setting people free from unclean spirits, Jesus stated, “*Or how can anyone enter the strong man’s house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house*” (Matthew 12:29; see also Mark 3:27). Jesus used “deo” to identify the influence of an unclean spirit, literally “a spirit of weakness,” to afflict a woman saying, “*And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?*” (Luke 13:16). It is used to describe the prevention of the activity of angels: “*I heard one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, ‘Then I heard a voice saying, ‘Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates’*” (Revelation 9:14). And it is used to identify the prohibition and prevention of the activity of Satan himself, “*Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. ² And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years*” (Revelation 20:1-2).

The Greek word translated “loose” is “luo” and can be translated, according to its context in various ways. Corresponding to and in contrast to “deo,” “luo” is used to identify unbinding, untying, releasing, and setting free or, beyond this, to break, dissolve and destroy. Most often it is used to identify activity in the physical realm of life in regard to persons or physical objects being “loosed” from something physical. It is used of setting the resurrected Lazarus free from his grave clothes, “*The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him, and let him go’*” (John 11:44). It is used of Paul being released from imprisonment, “*But on the next day, wishing to know for certain why he had been accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Council to assemble*” (Acts 22:30). John the Baptist preached, “*After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals*” (Mark 1:7; also Luke 3:16; John 1:27; Acts 13:25; see also Acts 7:33; 27:41). It is used to describe what happened when Jesus physically healed a man, “*And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he began speaking plainly*” (Mark 7:35). On different occasion, Jesus spoke of untying an animal that was bound. To justify His healing on the Sabbath, He said, “*You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water him?*” (Luke 13:15). And He instructed His disciples, “*Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me*” (Matthew 21:2; Mark 14:2, 4, 5; Luke 19:30, 31, 33). It is also used to mean destroy or dissolve something physical. Jesus used it to describe what could happen at His physical death, “*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*” (John 2:19). Peter uses it three times to describe the destruction of the physical universe, “*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. ¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!*” (2 Peter 3:10-12).

“luo” is also used to identify activity in the spiritual realm of life. A number of times it is used to describe the releasing or setting people free from obligations to obey authoritative teaching of doctrine or the commandments of God. Jesus said, “*Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:19). The Jews accused Jesus of “loosing” the commandment to honor the Sabbath by healing on the Sabbath, “*For this reason therefore the*

Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God” (John 5:18). Jesus justified His action of healing on the Sabbath by the Jews circumcising on the Sabbath, “If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath?” (John 7:23). And most importantly, Jesus said the written word of God cannot be “loosed” saying, “the Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). “luo” is used to describe being set free from the power of death, “But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power” (Acts 2:24). It identifies the release from the covenant relationship and obligation of marriage: “Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife” (1 Corinthians 7:27). And it is used to describe release from and dissolution of the civil and ceremony requirements of the Old Covenant Law, “For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace” (Ephesians 2:14-15). Most gloriously, it is used to identify the effect of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ to save us from the power of our sins, “and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood” (Revelation 1:5). And it is used of breaking the seals of the book (literally “scroll”) that would be given to the Lord Jesus Christ, “And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?” (Revelation 5:2).

Most importantly the word “luo” is used specifically in regard to the activity of spirits and Satan himself. It is used to identify permitting and setting angels free to act, “I heard one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.” ¹⁵ And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they would kill a third of mankind” (Revelation 9:14-15). Jesus speaks of a woman being “loosed” from the power of an evil spirit under the rule of Satan, “And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?” (Luke 13:16). John writes that the express purpose of the Lord Jesus coming to save us was to “loose” us from the work of the Satan, “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). And it is used to identify the release of Satan from his imprisonment to act and influence the nations, “and he (an angel) threw him (Satan) into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time” (Revelation 20:3). And “when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison” (Revelation 20:7).

II. THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS TO BIND AND LOOSE SPIRITS

One of the primary areas of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ was casting out, delivering or setting people free from the activity, influence and power of unclean spirits or demons. There are numerous accounts of this in the gospels. The significance of the Lord Jesus Christ casting out demons was not merely that an individual person had been set free from the influence and control of an unclean spirit. It was that such an encounter demonstrated that the kingdom of God had manifested in this present age. Jesus, “If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matthew 12:28). The kingdom of God is the exercise of the God’s sovereign authority and power to cause His will to be done (Matthew 6:10) and, therefore, it is the place or realm where God’s rule is manifested.

Essential to the exercise and manifestation of the kingdom of God are both authority and power. Authority has to do with the right to act. Power has to do with the force used to cause one’s will to be done. Both the authority and power of the kingdom of God are essential to the casting out of demons. In Luke 9:1, the Scripture states, “And He (Jesus) called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons.” Authority and power are distinguished from each other.

Because Jesus gave the disciples both authority and power to cast out demons, we are to understand that authority and power were given to Jesus by God the Father. Just as Jesus was given authority on earth to forgive

sins and demonstrated this authority by the exercise of His power to heal the one who had been bound with disease (Matthew 9:2-8), so Jesus had authority and power to cast out demons. He then gave this to His disciples with the commission that they proclaim the kingdom of God (Luke 9:2).

When we look at what Jesus taught and revealed about His ministry of casting out demons, we find that He used the terms “bind” and “loose” in this context. The terms “bind” and “loose” were used by Him to identify and describe the exercise of authority with regard to the activity, influence and control of spirits, whether it was the authority and power of God and His kingdom or the authority and power of Satan and his kingdom.

A. MATTHEW 12:22-29

The first place we find Jesus using these terms is in His response to an accusation made against Him by His opponents. While there was no doubt among them that Jesus actually cast unclean spirits out of people, they accused Him of doing it by the authority and power of Satan (Matthew 12:24; also Matthew 9:34; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15). In response to this accusation, Jesus made a number of statements that are foundational and relevant to “binding” spirits.

First, in order to counter their accusation, Jesus uses the principle of logical argument of the law of non-contradiction saying, “*Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand.*”²⁶ *If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?*” (Matthew 12:25-26). He says the practical effects of His setting people free from demons logically contradicts their accusation, for if He was employing the authority and power of Satan to cast out spirits, then Satan’s kingdom would be fighting against itself, destroying itself and it would not stand. This would be nothing less than a civil war in Satan’s kingdom. Thus, by logical inference, He is saying that the spiritual authority and power operating in and through Him is that of the kingdom of God which is utterly opposed to the kingdom of Satan and it is laying waste to the kingdom of Satan, causing it to fall. Far from a civil war in Satan’s kingdom, this is a power encounter between two different kingdoms - the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. The authority and power of the kingdom of God manifesting in and through Him is engaging and defeating the power of the kingdom of Satan.

It is important to observe that Jesus applies this principle that the two kingdoms are engaged in a power encounter to smaller geographical areas which are lesser areas of authority or regions of jurisdiction where the authority and power of the two kingdoms are exercised and manifested. He says, “*Any city or house divided against itself will not stand.*” There is the overall kingdom which possesses the authority, and then there are the lesser or smaller regions of jurisdiction where the authority and power of that kingdom are exercised which are a “city” and then a “house.” The kingdom has the highest authority and the city and the house are the lesser areas of authority or regions jurisdiction where the authority and power of the kingdom is exercised.

Jesus next goes on to make the logical deduction and assertion that if it is not by the power of Satan that He casts out demons, then it must be by the power of the Holy Spirit and, because of this, it must be the authority of the kingdom of God that is being exercised and manifested through Him. He says, “*But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you*” (Matthew 12:28).

It is important to observe that it is not the personal spirit of Satan himself who is cast out of the person but other personal unclean spirits or demons that the Holy Spirit engages and casts out of the person. These unclean spirits are in the kingdom of Satan and they act under his authority using their own relative power to cause their will and the overall will of Satan to be done in the life of the person they have entered. Thus, Jesus says that the casting out of individual demons by the power of the Holy Spirit is the evidence and proof that the kingdom of God is being manifested in this age and is now present “upon” or “before” the very eyes of His false accusers.

After making these foundational statements, Jesus then uses an analogy to illustrate and support the fact that the authority of the kingdom of God and power of the Holy Spirit are working in Him to cast out demons. It is here that He uses the word “bind” specifically in reference to unclean spirits or demons. He says, “*Or how can anyone enter the strong man’s house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house*” (Matthew 12:29).

Just as Jesus so often used examples from the physical realm of life to illustrate what actually happens in the spiritual realm (John 3:12), so this analogy is taken from the realm of the physical world to illustrate and to teach what was happening in the spiritual realm when He cast spirits out of people. He speaks of a “house” and a “strong man.” In a direct way, the “house” is under the control and influence of a “strong man.” Because he is “strong,” the only way it is possible for another person to “carry off” any of his “property” is that he would have to be even stronger and more powerful than “the strong man.” Jesus speaks here of a personal encounter with this “strong man” in which there is the struggle and wrestling of a great fight between the two and “the strong man” is defeated and overcome by the one who is even more powerful. A “power encounter” has taken place with the result that the stronger man is able to “plunder” the “strong man’s house.”

However, Jesus goes beyond merely stating that there is a power encounter such as between two wrestlers who engage in personal, hand to hand combat, for He says that the more powerful man “first binds the strong man.” There is not only the exercise of personal strength and power of the fight but there is also the tying up of the strong man so that he is prevented and prohibited from being able to effectively use his power and influence. It is because he is first bound that he cannot use his power to prevent his house from being plundered and his possessions taken away.

Jesus used this analogy from the physical realm to illustrate what actually took place with the reality of spiritual warfare in the spiritual realm. In the act of setting people free from demons, there is a power encounter between Jesus and the kingdom of God and Satan and his kingdom. Jesus is exercising the authority of the kingdom of God against that of Satan and his kingdom authority. Jesus is the stronger man whose power comes from the Holy Spirit Who is the power that is greater than the power of Satan.

Jesus says that it is because of the authority and power of the kingdom of God that He first “binds” the “strong man” which is the spirit that has had control and influence in the life of the person. When Jesus bound the spirit, He exercised His superior authority and power “to restrict, restrain, prohibit, or prevent” the influence and activity of the strong man. Whether this “binding” speaks of the use of an actual rope or chain composed of spiritual substance (i.e., Revelation 9:14; 20:1-2) or is a metaphor (Acts 20:22), what is actually taking place in the spiritual realm is that a spirit is being prevented from the exercise of its authority and power. That spirit is bound with the express purpose of plundering the “house.”

The Old Testament background for the use of this illustration is a Messianic prophecy in Isaiah 49:24-25 which states

“Can the prey be taken from the mighty man, or the captives of a tyrant be rescued?”²⁵ Surely, thus says the Lord, ‘Even the captives of the mighty man will be taken away, and the prey of the tyrant will be rescued; for I will contend with the one who contends with you, and I will save your sons.’”

The Hebrew word translated “mighty man” is “gibbor” and means “warrior, champion.” As David defeated Goliath, the strong man champion of the Philistines, Jesus, the son of David, is the Savior of God’s people and He wages war against the warrior champion strong man who has held them in captivity.

There are two related questions of interpretation of this passage that must be addressed: (1) who or what is “the strong man,” and (2) what is the “house” that is “plundered.”

One common interpretation is that the “strong man” is Satan himself, the personal evil spirit who is the ruler over his kingdom, and the “house” is the present evil age where Satan exercises his kingdom rule over the lives of people (Galatians 4:1). According to this interpretation, Jesus is using the word “house” in a completely metaphorical sense and with the meaning that the “kingdom” and “house” are the same thing. Since Satan is “the strong man,” the “binding” of the strong man would then be the binding of Satan himself and this would be a metaphorical binding with the effect that Satan is forbidden and prohibited from exercising his authority, power, influence and control in this present age. As the context shows, the effect of binding the personal spirit Satan is that other specific personal unclean spirits or demons under his authority and control can then be cast out of individual people. The plundering of Satan’s house and taking away his property would then be that individual people are set free from the overall influence and control of Satan and his kingdom.

A second interpretation is based on the use of the word “house” in the surrounding context of Matthew chapter 12 where Jesus uses it two other times. The first place is in Matthew 12:25 where He distinguishes between a kingdom, a city and a house. The context would support the interpretation that the kingdom and house are two different areas or regions of jurisdiction - not the same as the above interpretation would understand them. The second place in which the term “house” is used is in Matthew 12:44 where Jesus quotes an unclean spirit that has been cast out of a person as saying, “*I will return to my house from which I came.*” In this statement, the “house” is an actual person out of whom this spirit had gone out.

According to these two uses of “house” by Jesus in the surrounding context of Matthew chapter 12, the term “house” would identify an actual person that the unclean spirit has inhabited and is cast out of. The “strong man” would not be Satan himself, but different actual spirit under the authority of Satan doing the will of Satan by influencing, controlling and ruling in the life of the person. Jesus “binding” this ruling spirit would be the exercise of His kingdom authority and power in a specific area of jurisdiction which would be the life of that individual person. The binding of this ruling spirit would prohibit and prevent that ruling unclean spirit from having influence, power and control in and over the life of that person. This is a direct power encounter between the two kingdoms, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, with the actual engagement between the power of the Holy Spirit and the power of the individual unclean spirit in the life of the person. While it is not the personal spirit of Satan himself that is directly bound, the outcome of this power encounter is that Satan’s kingdom has been engaged and defeated. The person has been set free from the Satan’s overall kingdom rule because the person has been delivered from the direct influence of the unclean spirit. Using the battle analogy, the troops on the ground are directly engaged and defeated, and the effect is that the commanding general is defeated.

From Jesus’ use of “bind” in this passage we find that:

(1) “Bind” identifies the exercise of authority directed toward a spirit so as to prohibit and prevent the exercise of authority and power by that spirit working and manifesting in a person’s life. In this passage, it designates the exercise of the authority of the kingdom of God by the power of the Holy Spirit.

(2) The exercise of this authority and power is directed toward a spirit which is identified as “*the strong man.*” The “strong man” is a spirit under the authority of Satan and it has rule in the life of a person so as to influence and control that person. The kingdom of Satan is engaged and defeated by directly engaging and defeating this spirit working under Satan’s authority and casting it out of the person.

(3) Whether there are other unclean spirits under the authority of the strong man that are operating in the life of the person is not explicitly addressed. However, the fact that it is spoken of as the “strong man” supports the idea that there can be other spirits of lesser authority in the life of the person. By first exercising authority to “bind the strong man,” the other spirits can then be directly engaged and defeated so as to cast them out of a person. An example of this would be the man with the “legion” of demons. There was one spirit that spoke for all the others (Mark 5:9). When he was defeated, the others were engaged and cast out as well.

(4) The authority and power to “bind” is exercised in a jurisdictional area which is identified as a “house.” The house is an actual individual person who is set free from the power and influence of the unclean spirit. The fact that Jesus speaks also of a “city” supports the belief that there are territorial spirits that rule over larger geographical areas.

B. LUKE 13:10-17

As with the previous passage, the second passage in which Jesus used the terms “bind” and “loose” in regard to the activity of spirits is in response to an accusation and criticism of Him by opponents (Luke 13:17). The context is one in which Jesus freed a woman from a spirit that had influence and control in her life. Once again, there was no question that Jesus set the person free from the spirit. The opposition to Jesus was because He did it on a Sabbath day (Luke 13:14). It was in response to this criticism that Jesus used the terms “bind” and “loose.” There are a number of things to observe in this passage about the use of the words “bind” and “loose.”

First, Luke gives important background which led up to this event saying, “*And there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all*” (Luke 13:11). Luke states that there was a “spirit” operating in the life of a woman. The Greek literally

says “a woman having a spirit.” The woman was “the house” of this spirit in which it exercised authority and power to cause its will and desire to be done in her life. This spirit was, literally in the Greek, “a spirit of weakness.” This has been translated as “*a spirit of infirmity*” (KJV), “*a disabling spirit*” (ESV) or “*a sickness caused by a spirit*” (NASB). This spirit exercised its authority and power in a specific area of her life which was in her body to cause weakness and infirmity that disabled her. This was manifested by her being “*bent double*” so that she “*could not straighten up at all.*” Literally the Greek says “she herself had no power to raise to completion.” The power of the spirit in her was greater than her own physical power with the result that she was disabled and could not raise herself up to walk erect.

Next, Luke states, “*When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, ‘Woman, you are freed from your sickness’*” (Luke 13:12). The Greek word translated “*freed from*” is “*apoluo*” which has the root “*luo*” which means “loose.” In the Greek, Jesus literally declared, “*Woman, you are loosed/set free from your weakness.*” Jesus uses the terminology of “loose” with regard to an unclean spirit. This “loosing” of the spirit from this woman resulted in her being released and set her free from the activity, influence and control of this spirit. We see also that not only did Jesus speak these words of declaration to her but He also “*laid His hands on her; and immediately she was made erect again and began glorifying God*” (Luke 13:12-13). Thus, Jesus both spoke to this woman and touched her with the effect that she was “*healed.*” It is because she was healed on the Sabbath that his opponents criticized Him (Luke 13:14).

In responding to His opponent’s criticism of healing on the Sabbath, Jesus once again uses an analogy from everyday life in the physical realm to justify and explain His actions. He says, “*You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water him?*” (Luke 13:15). In order to defeat the accusation of His opponents, Jesus employs the principle of the equity. He says, “On principle, you do the same thing and, therefore, you are hypocrites for condemning me.” But more than the principle of equity, He also uses the force of logic of the lesser to the greater, the principle that if something is true of one thing, it is more true of something greater. The lesser is the ox or the donkey, the greater is the woman made in the image of God. If they value the life of an ox or donkey, they must value even more the life of a human being.

In this statement, Jesus identifies the ox or donkey as “*his*” - “*his ox,*” “*his donkey.*” This means that these animals are the possession of and, therefore, under the jurisdiction of the owner (see Isaiah 1:3). The owner has the right to do with them as he pleases and to use his power with regard to the ox or donkey as he pleases. Jesus illustrates this by saying the owner can place the ox or donkey where he wants, which would be in a “*stall,*” or “*lead him*” where he wants, which would be “*away to water him.*” Thus, because the ox and donkey are “*his,*” the owner has jurisdictional authority which he can exercise as he desires.

The way the owner exercises jurisdictional authority over his ox or donkey is that he “*unties*” his ox or donkey. The Greek word translated “*unties*” is “*luo.*” This means that there is something that has bound the animal so that it is prevented and prohibited from acting in some way. In this illustration, it is bound in a stall and does not have the power to free itself and then act as it desires. The owner “looses” the ox or donkey from what prevented and prohibited it from acting and then will “*lead him away*” as he desires. In this case, it is according to his good will for he leads it to “*water*” so that it can drink and be blessed.

It is on the basis of this analogy from the physical realm that Jesus then tells his opponents what happened in the spiritual realm. He says, “*And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?*” (Luke 13:16). We can make the following observations about this statement:

First, Jesus says, “*this woman.*” Being a woman, she is of greater value than an ox or a donkey.

Second, she is “*a daughter of Abraham.*” Why does Jesus say and emphasize this? It is not that He is seeking to gain some emotional sympathy or appeal to ethnic or patriotic prejudice. Being a “*daughter of Abraham,*” she is a member of the covenant people of God, the people of Israel. This means that, just as Jesus spoke to His opponents about the ox or donkey being “*his,*” so being a “*daughter of Abraham,*” this woman is God’s. Being a member of the covenant people of God, God has jurisdictional authority over her life. What Jesus is asserting is the principle of jurisdictional authority, and having jurisdictional authority, God had the right to exercise His power in her life so as to do as He pleased in order to accomplish His good will in her life.

A study of the gospels shows that Jesus was very much aware of and ministered under and according to the principle of jurisdictional authority. This principle of jurisdictional authority from God which gave Him the right to exercise the power of God with regard to His covenant people was stated by Jesus in His interaction with the Gentile woman who came imploring Him to He cast out a demon from her daughter (Matthew 15:22). Jesus made two statements to her about His jurisdictional authority to exercise power in the life of her daughter with the implication that He would not grant this mother's request.

First, He said, "*I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*" (Matthew 15:24). The authority that Jesus had so as to exercise His power to cast out demons came from God, Who is the God of Israel. God had "*sent*" Jesus with the assignment that He was to go "*only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*" This meant that He had been given jurisdictional authority to exercise His power to cast out demons only in the lives of the covenant people of God, the lost sheep of the people of Israel. It is for this reason that, when Jesus sent out His disciples with the direction to preach that "*the kingdom of heaven was near*" and demonstrate it by healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing lepers, and casting out demons, He began the whole discourse telling them, "*Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; ⁶ but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*" (Matthew 10:5-6). Why begin with this statement? It was not simply a geographical direction but a jurisdictional authorization. At that time in history, Jesus had only been given jurisdictional authority to exercise the power of the kingdom with the covenant people of God, the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and not the Gentiles. It was after He rose from the dead and after "*all authority in heaven and earth*" had been given to Him (Matthew 28:18) that He sent them to "*the ends of the earth*" (Acts 1:8).

Although Jesus made this first statement about His jurisdictional authority, the Gentile woman did not give up her request that Jesus help her (Matthew 15:25). Because of this, Jesus made the second statement in regard to jurisdictional authority and the use of His power saying, "*It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs*" (Matthew 15:26). In this context, what is "*the children's bread?*" While in the overall general sense, it is the salvation of God gives to His children, in this context it is specifically deliverance from demons. The jurisdictional authority to exercise the power of the kingdom of God to cast out demons was assigned by God to Jesus and was to be used on behalf of "*the children.*" The "*children*" are the covenant people of God, the lost sheep of Israel, the children of Abraham. It is in this regard that He uses the term "*dogs.*" Just as "*sheep*" were clean animals of God's flock, "*dogs*" were unclean animals. Being unclean, they were outside of the covenant and, thus, were not to receive the benefits of the blessings of God given to His covenant people. Jesus stated this principle in the Sermon on the Mount saying, "*Do not give what is holy to dogs*" (Matthew 7:6). Being a Gentile, this woman was spiritually a "*dog,*" outside the covenant community and, therefore, could not receive the blessings of the covenant (Philippians 3:2; Revelation 22:15). Once again, Jesus is implying that He does not have jurisdictional authority to cast out the demon from this woman's daughter because she, being a Gentile, was not a member of the covenant people of God. Thus, Jesus speaks to this woman two times concerning His jurisdictional authority to exercise power to cast out demons saying it is for the covenant people of God.

As this account continues, we see revealed that those who are reckoned by God as being among the true covenant people of God are not only the ethnic people of Israel but those who have faith in God, the God of Israel. Historically, this is identified as "*the faith of Abraham*" (Romans 3:29-4:12). Jesus used this exact terminology, that a person is "*of Abraham,*" in regard to the tax collector Zaccheus. After Zaccheus confessed faith and repentance to the Lord Jesus, He declared, "*Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:9-10). Zaccheus was "*a lost sheep of the house of Israel*" and came to saving faith in the Lord Jesus. Thus, he was a true "*son of Abraham.*" The Gentile woman responded to Jesus with this faith saying, "*Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Jesus, seeing her faith, declared, 'O woman, great is your faith. It shall be done for you as you wish'*" (Matthew 15:27-28). Just as Jesus used the terms to identify this woman as a spiritually unclean person outside the covenant, her response declares and confesses that she can be and, in fact, is one who can receive "*the children's bread.*" She speaks of "*the dogs which feed on the crumbs...from the master's table.*" She confesses and declares that while ethnically she is an unclean Gentile, by coming under the authority of "*the master*" she is spiritually "clean" and can partake of the benefits of "*the children's bread.*" The gospel of Mark emphasizes this quoting her as saying, "*the dogs under the table*" (Mark

7:28). She has come “*under the table*” meaning under the jurisdiction of the covenant people of God to receive “*the children’s bread*” from “*the table*” which is the provision of the covenant blessings of the people of God (Psalm 23: 5). This is a direct expression of her faith in the God of Abraham and His covenant people Israel. Although ethnically a Gentile, it is because of her faith -faith like that of Abraham - that she could be and was reckoned by God as member of the spiritual “*children*” of God. Her faith made her a member of the covenant people, just as Rahab the harlot was (Hebrews 11:31) and Ruth (Ruth 1:16). She was spiritually under the jurisdiction of the covenant people and, therefore, she could be a partaker of the blessings of the covenant promises (Psalm 103:2-3).

It should also be observed that the principle of jurisdictional authority was observed by Jesus in that as this woman was “*a daughter of Abraham,*” her house was under the jurisdiction of her authority as a believer. It was not she who needed “*the children’s bread*” of deliverance from the demon but her daughter. However, because she was a believer, her covenant jurisdictional authority extended to her house and her children (1 Corinthians 7:14). For this reason, Jesus could exercise His jurisdictional authority and power in the life of this woman’s daughter so that she was delivered from the demon.

Returning to the woman in Luke 13, Jesus says of her that she is “*a daughter of Abraham.*” This means that she is a member of the covenant people of God, the people to whom Jesus has been sent by the Father. Therefore, He has jurisdictional authority to exercise His power in the life of this woman. Also, she had the faith of Abraham as well to receive the manifestation of the kingdom of God, “*the children’s bread,*” which was to be set free from the spirit operating in her life.

The third thing to observe from what Jesus says in Luke 13:16 is that He employs the terms “bind” and “loose” with regard to what happened in the spiritual realm in the life of this woman. He speaks of her being a woman “*whom Satan has bound.*” The Greek word translated “*bound*” is “*deo.*” Jesus uses this word to identify the exercise of authority and power by Satan in the life of this woman to influence and control her so as to prohibit and prevent her from a specific activity. She was bent over and had no power in herself to move freely as she desired and as God created her to do.

Fourth, while Jesus speaks of this “binding” as being done by Satan, we can observe that because of what is stated earlier in the context by Luke (13:11), it was not the personal spirit Satan himself who directly “*bound*” this woman but a different spirit, “*a spirit of weakness.*” On the basis of this statement, we are to understand that Jesus means that the unclean spirit of weakness is the agent and servant of Satan acting under the authority of Satan, and it is by means of this spirit that Satan exercised his kingdom influence and control in life of this woman. Just as the Bible attributes the direct activity of angels in a person’s life to God and His kingdom, so the same is true of evil and unclean spirits in regard to Satan and his kingdom. They are agents of Satan, in the kingdom of Satan, and operating under the authority of Satan so as to do his will. This unclean “spirit of weakness” was the servant and agent of Satan that had been given assignment, orders or direction, whether directly from Satan himself or through levels of authority and command (Ephesus 6:12), to cause this woman to be “*bound.*” Thus, because the will and kingdom of Satan were being manifested in the life of this woman by the direct agency of this unclean spirit, Jesus attributes this activity ultimately to Satan and his kingdom.

A fifth observation to make is that so effective was the exercise of authority and power of this spirit in her life that Jesus identifies it as a “*bond.*” He said, “*And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?*” (Luke 13:16). The Greek word translated “*bond*” is “*desmos*” which comes from the root word “*deo.*” A “*bond*” would be a chain, rope or something that holds something, whether it is an animal like an ox or donkey, or a human who becomes a slave or prisoner that is held captive. This spirit acted as a “*bond*” that prevented and prohibited her from having freedom to act as she desired.

Compare and contrast this with the same terminology used by Luke about the man with the legion of demons. Luke states that “*the unclean spirit... had seized him many times; and he was bound*” (Greek verb from “*desmeuo*” from the root “*deo*”) *with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and yet he would break his bonds* (Greek “*desmos*”) *and be driven by the demon into the desert*” (Luke 8:29). Here the unclean spirits operating in the man had greater strength and power than physical bonds of the chains and shackles. In Luke 13, the “*bond*” is the spirit which had greater power than the physical strength of the woman. It exercised its power

so that it was like a chain or shackle in her life that prevented and prohibited her from the free use of her physical body.

Sixth, because this woman was the “house” of this spirit, the spirit had jurisdictional authority to be in her life. This jurisdictional authority can be identified as “legal ground.” Ephesians 4:27 states, “*Do not give the devil a place*” (the Greek is “*tupos*” which literally means “*place*,” not “*opportunity*”). The devil is given “a place” because he is given legal authority to take that place, which the context shows is “*sin*” (Ephesians 4:26). The “place” that the devil takes because of sin is “legal ground.” “Legal ground” gave “the spirit of weakness” the right to exert its power, influence and control in the woman’s life. This is significant, for Jesus identifies her as “*a daughter of Abraham*.” This means although she a member of the covenant people of God and one who had the faith of Abraham, there was also at the same time the authority and legal ground for this evil spirit to exercise its power, influence and control in her life in a specific way.

Seventh, Jesus spoke of her as being “*released*” from this “*bond*.” The Greek word translated “*released*” is “*luo*” which means “loose.” Because she was “*a daughter of Abraham*,” Jesus had jurisdictional authority to exercise kingdom authority and power in her life. She was “loosed” from the authority and power of this spirit by the superior authority and power of the Lord Jesus Christ which He directed toward this spirit. Being “loosed” from the power of this evil spirit, she was “*healed*.”

On the basis of Jesus’ use of the terms “bind” and “loose” in this passage we find that:

(1) “Bind” identifies the exercise of authority and power. In this passage, we find that the terms are used to designate both the exercise and authority of the kingdom of God and the authority and power of Satan and his kingdom.

(2) The exercise of this authority and power to “bind” and “loose” is directed toward both a human being and a spirit. Through “the spirit of weakness,” Satan exercised power and authority to “bind” the woman. Jesus exercised power and authority to “loose” that spirit from the woman.

(3) In this context, “bind” means the exercise of authority and power so as to prohibit and prevent the exercise of authority and power of another. Through the direct agency of “the spirit of weakness,” Satan “*bound*” her so that she was prevented and prohibited from having power to act as she wanted.

(4) We can see that the direct work and activity of the spirit is under the authority and rule of Satan and, for this reason, the Lord Jesus Christ attributes this activity to Satan himself.

(5) In this context, “loose” means the exercise of authority and power to set a person free to act as they desire. The specific thing from which the woman was set free was “the spirit of weakness.” Being “loosed” from this spirit, she was free to use her own power and ability to act according to how God had designed and created her and as she desired.

C. SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS FROM JESUS USE OF “BIND” AND “LOOSE”

(1) Jesus uses the terms “bind” and “loose” to identify and describe the exercise of authority and power. Authority is the right to act in the area of jurisdiction. Power is the force to act.

(2) “Bind” means to restrict, restrain, prohibit, or prevent the activity, influence and control of a spirit. “Loose” means to release and/or to set free from the activity, influence and control of a spirit.

(3) Authority and power to bind and loose can be either that of the kingdom of God by the power of the Holy Spirit or the kingdom of Satan by the power of other evil spirits.

(4) Authority and power are directed in specific areas and regions of jurisdiction. An area or region of jurisdiction is a location or place of “legal ground” where the authority of the kingdom has the right to exercise its power. These areas of jurisdictional authority are greater and lesser in authority and power. Jesus described them as a “*kingdom*,” and “*city*” and a “*house*.” He also identifies greater areas or regions of jurisdiction as a “*city*” and the overall “*kingdom*.”

(5) Jesus was given authority and power from the Father to manifest the kingdom of God. His assignment was a specific area of jurisdiction and was not and could not be exercised outside that area of jurisdiction. His jurisdiction was the covenant people of Israel and the individuals who are spiritually “*children of Abra-*

ham.”

III. THE DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY TO BIND AND LOOSE SPIRITS BY THE LORD JESUS CHRIST GIVEN TO HIS CHURCH

A. THE DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY TO BIND AND LOOSE

On two different occasions, the Lord Jesus Christ declared, *“Whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”*

The first declaration is recorded in Matthew 16:19. The immediate context is that Jesus has asked His disciples who they say and confess that He is (Matthew 16:15). Simon Peter answered

“You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” To this confession of faith, Jesus said *“Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven”* (Matthew 16:16-19).

The second occasion is recorded in Matthew 18:18. The greater context is that Jesus is teaching His disciples about *“the church”* and church discipline by outlining the procedure and steps of church discipline. He concludes with the words, *“If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector”* (Matthew 18:17). Immediately following this, He states, *“Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven”* (Matthew 18:18).

It is most significant that in the two different contexts in which Jesus makes the declaration concerning “binding” and “loosing” both have to do with *“the church.”* There are only two places in which the gospels record Jesus making the declaration of the delegation of “binding” and “loosing” and there are only two times in the gospels where He specifically uses the word *“church”* and these are used in the same contexts with both statements being used in relationship to each other. While the first declaration by Jesus concerning authority to bind and loose in Matthew 16 is directed to Peter, the context shows that Jesus’ concern is His church and the building of His church. The individual Peter first confessed faith in Who Jesus is and then Jesus declares that such a confession is the rock on which Jesus will build His church. It is after this that Jesus says that He will give to Peter *“the keys of the kingdom”* and one of the keys is the authority to bind and loose. Thus, the individual Peter who stands as the representative of the church in his confession of faith in Jesus also stands as the representative of the church in being given authority to bind and loose.

The context of the second declaration in Matthew 18 is that of the church and the exercise of church discipline. The fact that the declaration concerning “binding” and “loosing” immediately follows the teaching of Jesus about church discipline shows that the authority to bind and loose is given to the church.

Because Jesus delegated authority to *“bind”* and *“loose”* to His *“church,”* this means that every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has been delegated this authority. Every person who, like Peter, has confessed faith in Christ and is a member of His Church, the Body of Christ, has been given *“the key of kingdom”* to bind and loose.

B. WHAT THINGS CAN BE BOUND AND LOOSED?

In answering this question, the first thing that must be observed is that Jesus makes this very same statement two times on two different occasions in two different contexts. The significance of this is that because He makes this very same statement in two different contexts shows that the authority to “bind” and “loose” can be applied to different areas of life. It is, therefore, not a delegation of authority that is or can be directed and

applied to only one area exclusive of anything else. While the immediate context gives us understanding of how the act of binding and loosing is to be directed and applied, it does not mean, then, that it is the only and exclusive way in which this delegated authority can be directed and applied.

When we consider (1) the contexts in which the statements are made, and (2) the use of the terminology of “binding” and “loosing” by Jesus, we can see there are at least three ways in which the delegation of the authority to “bind” and “loose” can be directed and applied.

(1) The context of the first declaration by Jesus in Matthew 16:19 is the confession by Simon Peter that Jesus is “*the Christ, the Son of the Living God*” (Matthew 16:16). To this, Jesus declares that this knowledge of Who He is came by revelation from God the Father. It is this revelation from God that then resulted in the confession of faith by Simon of Who Jesus is. Jesus then gives Simon the name “*Peter*” (Greek “*petros*”) and says, “*On this rock (Greek “petra”) I will build My church and the gates of Hades will not overpower it*” (Matthew 16:18). This confession of Who Jesus is by “*Peter*” is the “*rock*” on which Jesus will build His church.

It is after this that Jesus declares He will give Peter “*the keys to the kingdom.*” A “*key*” is an instrument that is both the symbol of the right to exercise authority and the power to exercise that authority in a specific area or place (Revelation 1:18). Just as a key opens a door to a specific room or place, a “*key of the kingdom*” is authority and power that is given by the Lord Jesus Christ to exercise authority and power of the kingdom of God in a specific area (Revelation 3:7). This is an authority and power that was first given to Jesus from the Father and that Jesus then delegated to Simon Peter and the church. Because the context of this pronouncement is the building of His church, it is to be understood that Peter stands as the representative of the church as a whole. The Lord Jesus Christ will build His church on the “*rock*” of faith and confession of Him as Peter as just done. And it is to the church through Peter as representative that Jesus has given “*the keys of the kingdom.*” Jesus then identifies one of the keys saying, “*and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven*” (Matthew 16:19). In what way is this key of the kingdom to “bind” and “loose” to be applied? In this specific context of Matthew 16, it would be ***the authoritative determination and teaching of the doctrine concerning the Lord Jesus Christ on which the church is to be built.***

The understanding of authoritative determination and teaching of doctrine in terms of “binding” and “loosing” was spoken of by Jesus on different occasions. Jesus used the terminology “bind” to identify authoritative teaching of doctrine that sets forth obligations that people are to obey saying of the Pharisees, “*They tie up (“deo”) heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger*” (Matthew 23:4). The greater context is that they “*sit in Moses chair*” (Matthew 23:2) which is the seat of authority of teaching of the nation of Israel. Jesus used the term “loose” to describe the releasing or setting people free from obligations to obey authoritative teaching of doctrine or the commandments of God saying, “*Whoever then annuls (“luo”) one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:19). Thus, one way the authority to “bind” and “loose” is exercised in the church is by authoritative teaching.

(2) The context of the second declaration by Jesus is church discipline, specifically dealing with the matter of sin (Matthew 18:15). Jesus gives the procedure for dealing with sin in the church (Matthew 19:15-17). It is immediately following this that He makes the declaration, “*Whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven*” (Matthew 18:18). In what way is “bind” and “loose” to be applied in this context? That which can be directly referred to as “binding” and “loosing” ***is the authoritative dealing with sin.***

While they are different words, the basic idea of “*forgive*” (Greek “*aphiemi*”) is the same as “*loose.*” To “*forgive*” sins is to “loose or release” someone from the debt that they have incurred (Matthew 6:12). The risen Lord Jesus Christ stated to His disciples, “*If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained*” (John 20:23). This is the same principle as “binding” and “loosing.” In this way, the church is given authority to “bind” and “loose” by forgiving sin and not forgiving sin (!).

(3) Because Jesus applied the general principle of the authority to “bind” and “loose” to two different areas (teaching and sin) in two different contexts, it is evident that the overall general principle and terminology

of “binding” and “loosing” can be applied to other areas of life and ministry of the church. Such an area would be one in which Jesus Himself uses the terminology of “binding” and “loosing.” Because of both the example and the teaching of Jesus concerning “binding” and “loosing” spirits, it can be concluded that Christ’s declaration “*whatever you bind and loose*” can and does include ***the authority to “bind” and “loose” spirits.***

IV. PRACTICAL APPLICATION

A. THIS AUTHORITY IS ORDINARILY EXERCISED BY VERBAL COMMAND

The gospels, as well as the book of Acts, show us that the nature of casting or driving out demons from a person was a power encounter between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Jesus taught that an aspect of the act of casting out demons was the specific exercise of jurisdictional authority to bind and/or loose spirits. For that reason, it can be concluded that binding and loosing spirits was a specific action that He exercised in the process of casting or driving out a demon. While there is nothing in the Scriptural accounts that describe or teach exactly how Jesus did this, for the following reasons it can be concluded that the way Jesus ordinarily exercised His authority to bind and loose spirits was by a verbal command:

(1) Various accounts in the gospels show that a way Jesus exercised His authority over spirits was by the use of verbal command. For example, the very first public act of Jesus recorded in the gospel of Mark is when He is in a synagogue service and He verbally commands a spirit to leave a man saying, “*Be quiet, and come out of him*” (Mark 1:25). The observation of the people in the synagogue was, “*What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him*” (Mark 1:27). What was observed by the people is not only the authority of Jesus but how He exercised His authority - “*He commands the unclean spirits and they obey Him.*”

(2) When the use of the Greek words “deo” (bind) and “luo” (loose) is examined, it can be seen that the act of binding and loosing takes place as a result of a verbal command from one in authority. For example, the binding and loosing of the tares takes place as a result of the verbal command of the landowner (Matthew 13:30) and the binding of John the Baptist took place as a result of the command of Herod (Matthew 14:3).

(3) The way Jesus exercised His authority to bind and loose in other areas was by verbal command. For example, the way His authority to forgive sins was exercised was by verbal declaration as when Jesus said to the paralytic, “*Your sins are forgiven*” (Mark 2:5, 10).

(4) It is simply a fact of life that a way authority is exercised is by verbal command. This was recognized by the Centurion who had a servant that was ill and, because he did not consider himself worthy to personally make request to Jesus, he sent others to make the request. The Centurion stated, “*For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it*” (Matthew 8:9). This man understood authority and how it is exercised - that it is exercised by verbal command. On another occasion, after cursing the fig tree, Jesus told His disciples, “*...truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you*” (Matthew 17:20).

It is for these reasons that it can be concluded that the way Jesus exercised jurisdictional authority to bind and loose spirits was by verbal command. This verbal command was the exercise of His kingdom authority and power directed toward the unclean spirit or spirits.

It must be observed that binding and loosing is the exercise of kingdom authority and power directed to a spirit and not a form of prayer. Prayer is directed to God, being the humble request that God act in a certain way. The exercise of kingdom authority and power to bind and loose that is directed toward a spirit is not prayer. Prayer may be made to God that spirits be bound and loosed, and should be done when one is seeking to drive a spirit out of a person. This was made clear from Jesus’ response to His disciples after they could not drive a spirit out and asked Him, “*Why could we not drive it out?*” (Mark 9:28). He said, “*This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer*” (Mark 9:29). While prayer is directed toward God, the verbal command to exercise the kingdom authority to bind and loose spirits is directed toward a spirit.

Because the authority to bind and loose spirits has been delegated by the Lord Jesus Christ to His Church, believers can and are to exercise their authority in Christ to bind and loose spirits by verbal command.

Such a verbal command directed toward a spirit would be something like, “In the Name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, I bind...I loose...”

It should be observed that while the exercise of authority is ordinarily done by verbal command, this does not mean that this cannot be done by any other means as God may lead and direct a person. For example, Moses was instructed to use his staff to exercise the authority that God had given to him. He did not speak to the sea for it to divide so as to allow the people of Israel to walk through it on dry ground or to cause the sea to return to drown the army of Pharaoh (Exodus 14:16-30). His authority was not exercised by verbal command but a visual action. In the Gospel accounts of Jesus healing people, He could exercise His authority by verbal command or by visual actions, even actions that, to many today would seem strange such as spitting on a person’s eyes and that on two different occasions (Mark 7:33; 8:23)! These actions show that while verbal command may be the ordinary way in which authority is exercised, at God’s leading it can be exercised through other means such as visual actions. In the account of the woman with “the spirit of weakness,” Jesus spoke to her but also laid His hands on her after saying, “*Woman, you are freed from your sickness*” (Luke 13:12-13). This may have been the means through which the authority to loose the spirit was exercised. Thus, while the ordinary way in which the authority to bind and loose spirits is exercised is by verbal command, God may lead a person to do so by other non-verbal actions through which His authority is exercised.

B. THIS AUTHORITY AND POWER IS TO BE EXERCISED IN FAITH

When one examines the example and teaching of Jesus, it can be observed that faith is essential to the effective working of kingdom authority and power. This is demonstrated in:

(a) Jesus healing people - After the Centurion’s request that Jesus heal his servant by speaking a word of authority, Jesus observed, “*Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel*” (Matthew 8:10). After healing the woman with the issue of blood, Jesus said, “*Your faith has made you well*” (Matthew 9:22). And before healing two blind men Jesus asked, “*Do you believe I am able to do this*” and then said, “*It shall be done to you according to your faith*” (Matthew 9:28-29).

(b) Jesus exercising authority over the physical elements of nature - Before He commanded the storm at sea to be still, He turned and questioned His disciples who were filled with fear saying, “*Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?*” (Matthew 8:25-26). On another occasion, after cursing the fig tree, Jesus said to His disciples, “*Have faith in God. Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him*” (Mark 11:22-23).

(c) Jesus delivering people from demons - After the Transfiguration, Jesus came upon His disciples arguing with a man whose son had a demon which the disciples could not cast out. Upon finding that His disciples did not cast it out, Jesus said, “*O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you.*” The father then made request of Jesus that, if He can do anything, to cast the demon out. Jesus reacted saying, “*If you can? All things are possible to him who believes.*” The father confessed, “*I do believe, help my unbelief.*” Jesus then cast the demon out (Mark 9:14-24). Later his disciples asked him, “*Why could we not drive it out?*” and Jesus said to them, “*Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you*” (Matthew 17:20).

These accounts reveal that faith is essential to the effectual exercise of kingdom authority and power. The incident of the Centurion especially demonstrates that one must not only understand the kingdom principles of authority but also that faith is critical for the exercise of authority to be effective. Thus, for the effectual exercise of authority and power to bind and loose spirits one must have faith.

C. THIS AUTHORITY IS EXERCISED UNDER AND ACCORDING TO JURISDICTIONAL ASSIGNMENT

When considering the authority that the Lord Jesus Christ has given to every believer in His church to

bind and loose spirits, it is vital to understand that this authority is to be exercised under and according to jurisdictional assignment. Jesus understood that His authority was given to Him by the Father and was limited to the assignment the Father had given to Him. In principle, the authority to bind and loose unclean, demonic spirits is that of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is the rule and reign of God being exercised and, in this age on the earth, binding and loosing spirits is one of the manifestations of the authority and power of the kingdom of God. This was made clear in the context of Matthew 12:22-29 in which Jesus stated, *“But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you”* (Matthew 12:28). The casting out of demons was a manifestation of the kingdom of God and binding the strong man was a specific act of the casting out of the demon. Binding and loosing, then, are a manifestation of the kingdom rule of God and, because of this, this authority is to be exercised under the rule and according to the will of God and specifically under and according to the assignment of God.

The functional principle that the authority to bind and loose is to be exercised under and according to the assignment of God is directly stated by Jesus in the exact translation of His words in which He delegated this authority to His church. The Greek of Matthew 16:19 literally says, *“I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatever is to be (future tense) bound (aorist tense, active voice) on the earth shall have been bound (perfect tense, passive voice) in heaven and whatever is to be (future tense) loosed (aorist tense, active voice) shall have been loosed (perfect tense, passive voice) in heaven.”* Greek verbs primarily function with a focus on the action rather than on time as in English. The present tense communicates continuous action, while the future communicates action that will begin to take place in the future. The aorist communicates action completed at a point in time, while the perfect tense communicates action that began and was completed in the past and its effect relates in some way to the present. Then also in Greek, the voice communicates action relative to the subject. The active voice communicates action that the subject does while the passive voice communicates action done to the subject. Thus, what Jesus states in delegating authority to bind and loose is *“I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatever is to be (future - an action to take place in the future) bound (aorist tense, active voice - an action that is completed) on the earth shall have been bound (perfect passive - an action that has already taken place in the past but now affects the present) in heaven and whatever is to be (future - action to take place in the future) loosed (aorist tense, active voice - an action that is completed) shall have been loosed (perfect passive - an action that has already taken place in the past but now affects the present) in heaven.”* Paraphrasing this, Jesus said, *“In the future, you will exercise the authority that I have given to you (“the keys”) so that something (“whatever”) will be completely bound and something (“whatever”) will be completely loosed, but this action will have effect (“on earth”) because of the prior action that has already taken place by God (“in heaven”).* While some may infer from the word *“whatever”* that the authority to bind and loose is unlimited - in other words that *“whatever”* means *“anything and everything without any limitation”* - Jesus limits the authority that can be exercised to *“that which has already been bound or loosed in heaven.”* The authority to bind and loose is (a) a delegated authority from God that is (b) exercised because of God’s providential and sovereign initiative (*“shall have been bound/loosed in heaven”*) and (c) to be exercised according to God’s assignment. Being delegated, this authority to bind and loose spirits is to be exercised by the believer. However, this authority is not an unlimited authority that one can exercise according to one’s own desire or at one’s own initiative. Jesus understood this and exercised His authority under authority and according to the assignment of God. It is because of this that He told the Greek woman that He would not cast out the spirit from her daughter because He had been sent to *“the lost sheep of the house of Israel”* (Matthew 15:24).

The functional principle that authority from God is delegated, limited and to be exercised under and according to the assignment of God is demonstrated throughout the history of God’s people. One of the most significant places this can be seen is in the words that God spoke to Joshua as he was about to lead the people of God across the Jordan River and into the land. God said

“Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. ³ Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. ⁵ No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your

life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. ⁶ Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them” (Joshua 1:2-6).

Sometimes, people will take the words “*every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you*” as indicating an unlimited authority so that wherever Joshua might go in the entire world that ground was given to him. This, however, is not what the context shows for the statement “*every place on which the sole of your foot treads*” is limited to “*the land which I am giving to them*” which is across “*this Jordan*” River (Joshua 1:2). It is further identified and limited to “*From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory*” (Joshua 1:5). This is the land that God made covenant promises to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - to “*the sons of Israel*” (Joshua 1:2) - which is the Promised land.

More than this, the statement in Joshua chapter one is given in the greater context of the book of Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy chapters two and three, God prohibited the people of Israel from attacking the lands of Esau, Moab, and Ammon with the purpose that Israel might take and possess these territories. The reason God prohibited Israel from attacking them is because God had given these lands to these nations (Deuteronomy 2:5, 9, 19). Israel did not have jurisdictional authority from God to exercise the power of God in these places. On the other hand, they were directed with the assignment to attack, occupy and possess the lands of Sihon and Og (Deuteronomy 2:24 ff.; 3:1 ff.). The later promise spoken to Joshua that “*every place on which the sole of your foot treads I have given it to you*” (Joshua 1:3) was given in this greater context and on the basis of these previous directions and assignments.

These things demonstrate the kingdom principle that delegated authority is (a) to be exercised by the people of God, (b) to be done under and according to the assignment God gives, and (c) in the jurisdictional area, region or territory God sovereignly grants. The authority Christ has given to His church is not an unlimited authority to be exercised merely on one’s own initiative. It is ultimately the manifestation of the kingdom rule of God in this age where God’s will is being done on the earth as His people exercise the delegated authority they have been given by Christ according to the assignment God has given to them.

D. THIS AUTHORITY IS EXERCISED ACCORDING TO ONE’S JURISDICTION

The authority to bind and loose is a jurisdictional authority. “Jurisdiction” means “the realm, area or sphere in which rightful authority can be exercised.” This means that wherever a believer has jurisdiction, meaning wherever one has rightful authority from God, they can and are to exercise their authority in Christ in and over those realms, areas or spheres of authority and influence. It also means that one cannot exercise authority in realms, areas and spheres of authority where one does not have jurisdiction or rightful authority.

In the Matthew 12 account, Jesus identified different areas or regions of authority as a being “*house*,” a “*city*” and a “*kingdom*.” These are various areas or spheres of influence where one can have jurisdictional authority. Believers in Christ have authority over whatever area or sphere that has been rightfully given to them by God. This includes:

(a) **Their own person, meaning their body, soul and spirit** (I Thessalonians 5:23). This is because they have been redeemed and are Christ’s.

(b) **Their “house,” meaning their household and family.** The husband and wife have authority in the life of their spouse (I Corinthians 7:4) and parents have authority in the lives of their children (I Corinthians 7:14).

(c) **Their assignment from God** - This would include such areas of authority as (1) an ordained pastor who has been installed in a church, (2) the governing body of a church, (3) a person authorized to minister in a ministry of the church, (4) a person’s work place and area of employment, and (5) the jurisdiction of civil authority one has been rightfully given, such as a policeman, and (6) where God actually leads a person to minister and bring His kingdom.

Most critically, this includes areas in which God has assigned authority to a person so as to engage the

kingdom of Satan. This is what God did in his directions to Joshua (Joshua 1-2ff.). This is what Jesus did when He left the territory of Israel and went “*to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes*” (Mark 5:1) with the assignment to cast the legion of demons out of the man. Being under authority (Matthew 8:9) and ministering according to the assignment God had given to Him, Jesus stepped out of the boat on to Gentile territory and initiated a power encounter that brought the kingdom of God into this man’s life. Jesus ministered according to the assignment God had given to Him. This is what He did when Jesus healed the man at the pool of Bethesda. There were many sick people at that place, but He only healed one man. The reason He did this was because, as Jesus said, “*Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner*” (John 5:19). At the conclusion of His earthly ministry, Jesus prayed to the Father saying, “*You gave Him (the Son, Jesus) authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him...I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do*” (John 17:2,4). Jesus ministered under the authority and according to the assignment the Father had given to Him, in other words, according to the area of jurisdiction the Father had given to Him.

E. THIS AUTHORITY CAN BE FORFEITED BECAUSE OF SIN

Vital to the principle of the exercise of authority under and according to jurisdiction is that rightful jurisdictional authority may and can be forfeited because of sin. For example, while God had promised to give the people of Israel His power to conquer their enemies and take the promised land, the generation that had come out of Egypt refused to believe God and God judged that unbelieving generation declaring they would die in the wilderness. The next day, continuing in disobedience to God, they decided that they would attack their enemies and take the land. They were defeated because “*the LORD was not with them*” (Numbers chapter 14). Another example is what took place because of the sin of Achan. After the victory over Jericho, Achan sinned by taking objects that were under the ban, meaning they were things devoted exclusively to God. When Israel attacked the city of Ai, they were defeated because, as God said, Israel had sinned (Joshua chapter 7).

The principle that the exercise of authority can be forfeited is critical in binding and loosing spirits. It can be that because of sin that has not been confessed and repented, the spirits will have legal ground to remain and to exercise their authority. In such a case, the authority of the kingdom of God will not have rightful jurisdiction. As with Israel, they may have the covenant promise of God and the assignment of God yet because of their sin they forfeited the power of God because they forfeited rightful jurisdiction. In Ephesians 4:26-27, Paul warns believers that if they sin, they will give “a place” or legal ground to the devil. If one does not have rightful jurisdiction because there is sin, the authority cannot be exercised effectually to bind and loose spirits. Therefore, if the exercise of authority to bind and loose spirits is not effectually working, it may be due to sin that gives legal ground to the spirits to continue to remain. In order to take away the legal ground, the sin must be forgiven and that area cleansed (1 John 1:9).

F. THE EFFECTUAL EXERCISE OF THIS AUTHORITY CAN BE LIMITED BY THE SOVEREIGN PURPOSE OF GOD

While the fundamental functional principles are that Christ has given authority to bind and loose spirits to His church and this is to be exercised by a believer in the area of rightful jurisdiction, the Scriptures show that God, according to His sovereign purpose and wisdom, may permit Satan and his spirits to act in the life and sphere of authority of believers. This would be classified as an exception to the basic principle that God gives protection and authority to His own.

This exception is seen in the life and house of Job where God, according to His sovereign purpose, gave permission to Satan to act himself and through his agents in the sphere of authority of Job (Job 1:12; 2:6). God Himself said of Job that “*there is no one like him on the earth; a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning from evil*” (Job 1:8). The one illustration of his godliness is that he offered sacrifice for his house, specifically his children, because they may have sinned against God and, acting as the head and priest of the house, he

sought God's forgiveness for any sin they may have committed (Job 1:5). There would not have been any legal ground for Satan to have access into his life or the lives of his children because of sin. More than this, Satan spoke of the protection God had given to Job and his house saying, "Have you not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side?" (Job 1:10). Satan acknowledged the protection of God in Job's life and his sphere of authority and that he did not have legal ground or access to Job or his house and sphere of authority. However, God granted Satan to have "power" and, therefore, legal ground in Job's life and his house. This power, however, was limited by the sovereign purpose and permission of God (Job 1:12; 2:6). During this period, Job could not exercise his authority over and against Satan and his kingdom because God had a greater purpose.

This exception is especially illustrated in the life of the Apostle Paul who was given a "thorn in the flesh." Paul identified "the thorn in the flesh" as "a messenger (Greek "angelos" which can be an angel) of Satan" (2 Corinthians 12:7). Understanding it as a "messenger from Satan," it can be assumed that Paul exercised his authority against it because he had jurisdictional authority over his own person yet this was not effective. He therefore prayed for God to remove it, not once, but three times, meaning he persevered in believing prayer (2 Corinthians 12:8). But a special revelation from the Lord came to him that "the thorn in the flesh" would be permitted to remain. The reason was because of the greater purpose of God (2 Corinthians 12:9). Because God sovereignly granted permission for this "messenger of Satan" to remain in Paul's life, Paul could not exercise his authority over it because he did not have rightful jurisdictional authority from God over it. The authority to bind and loose, as Jesus said, is exercised where it has first been bound or loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:19).

G. BINDING AND LOOSING SATAN HIMSELF

Jesus delegated authority to "bind" and "loose" spirits to His church as one of the keys of the kingdom and it is to be exercised according to jurisdictional authority. The exercise of this authority is a power encounter in which the kingdom of God engages and overcomes the kingdom of Satan (Matthew 12:25-28). This kingdom principle is critical in the matter of "binding and loosing Satan." What does it mean to "bind and/or loose Satan" and what authority has been delegated to the church to "bind and/or loose Satan"?

In understanding the authority given to the church to "bind and/or loose Satan," the distinction must be made between (a) the personal spirit being "Satan" and (b) the kingdom of Satan which includes all the various kinds of spirits that exercise their power, influence and control in and over individuals, areas and regions under and according to the will of Satan (Mark 9:29; Ephesians 6:12).

In regard to the personal spirit of Satan himself, Scripture reveals that God, according to His sovereign purpose, has permitted and, therefore, willed that authority on the earth in this age be given to Satan and that he has freedom to roam the earth and act as he wills (Job 1:7; 2:2; Luke 4:6; Ephesians 2:2; I Peter 5:8; I John 5:19). This means that the authority to bind and/or loose the personal spirit Satan is not an unlimited authority given to believers. A believer has not been given jurisdictional authority so that he or she can at his or her own initiative prevent and prohibit the personal spirit Satan from working anywhere at any time in the realm of the earth. Sometimes, believers attempt to exercise authority over Satan saying "I bind Satan from..." or "...in this area" with the idea and belief that they are exercising authority to prevent and prohibit Satan himself from operating in the earth in that area of realm. Because the authority to bind and loose spirits is a jurisdictional authority, this is a vain statement if

- (a) God has not given that person the assignment and, therefore, the jurisdictional authority in that area;
- (b) Satan has legal ground to be there because of sin (Ephesians 4:26-27);
- (c) One cannot exercise the authority of rightful jurisdiction because God has, in His sovereign purpose, permitted Satan to work in that area (Job 1:12; 2:6; 2 Corinthians 12:9).

If a believer were actually dealing with the personal spirit Satan, he or she would only have authority to bind and/or loose him in one's rightful area of jurisdiction. Jesus spoke to Satan himself and ordered him to leave and he left Him (Matthew 4:10-11). He had jurisdiction over His own person. However, Jesus said in the Parable of the Sower that after sowing the seed of the word of God in the hearts of those identified as "beside the road," Satan would "snatch away what was sown in their hearts" (Matthew 13:19). Jesus did not have juris-

dictional authority to “bind Satan” and prevent him from working in this way in the lives of these people.

Authority to bind and loose Satan himself can only be exercised in the area of one’s rightful jurisdiction. This is evident from the fact that for years well-intentioned believers who have a partial understanding of binding and loosing spirits have “bound and/or loosed Satan” in virtually every area of life in this world with no effect. With all the verbal commands by these believers “binding” the work of Satan in virtually every realm of influence and authority throughout the earth, Satan would have been totally prevented from acting in any way and, in effect, would have been bound to the degree we read of in Revelation 20:1-2. This has not happened. He still roams the earth and, according to God’s purpose and plan, will do so until the end of the age.

H. BINDING AND LOOSING SATAN, MEANING THE SPIRITS WORKING AND MANIFESTING SATAN’S KINGDOM RULE AND AUTHORITY

The distinction is to be made between (a) Satan himself and (b) the kingdom of Satan which includes all the various kinds of spirits that exercise their power, influence and control in and over individuals, areas and regions under and according to the will of Satan (Mark 9:29; Ephesians 6:12). All of these spirits that are under Satan’s authority manifest his kingdom and work in his name. Because these spirits work in the name of Satan, believers can and are to exercise jurisdictional authority to “bind and/or loose Satan” meaning the kingdom of Satan that works and manifests through these spirits in his name.

In the Luke 13 account about the woman who had the “spirit of weakness,” Jesus speaks of the personal spirit, Satan, saying, “*And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?*” (Luke 13:16). As the account informs us earlier, the actual personal spirit that was the “bond” in the woman’s life was not Satan himself but a different spirit, identified as a “spirit of weakness” (Luke 13:11). While it was not the actual personal spirit Satan who afflicted this woman, Jesus attributes the working of the individual “spirit of weakness” directly to Satan. This is because the spirit operating in the woman’s life was under the rule and authority of Satan and manifesting the kingdom of Satan in her life.

This is the principle that to act “in the name of” an authority is the same as that authority working and acting itself. When Jesus acted in the name of God, it was God and His kingdom that was being manifested. When the “spirit of weakness” was working in the name of Satan and manifesting the kingdom of Satan, it was to be equated with Satan himself as the one manifesting this work. When Jesus engaged and defeated “the spirit of weakness,” this spirit was acting in the name of Satan and, therefore, Jesus spoke of that work being the work of Satan. Thus, for Jesus to “bind and/loose Satan” would mean that he did not literally bind the personal spirit Satan so as to prevent and prohibit him from personally acting. Jesus exercised His authority to “bind and/or loose Satan” by engaging and defeating the “spirit of weakness” that was acting in the name of Satan. When He exercised His authority to “bind and/or loose Satan,” this had the direct effect of prohibiting and preventing the work and manifestation of “the spirit of weakness” that was “*the bond*” in the life of the woman.

The distinction between (a) Satan himself and (b) the spirits working in the name of Satan to manifest his kingdom is important for the effectual exercise of the authority and key of the kingdom to bind and loose spirits. Through the exercise of jurisdictional authority, believers can and are to “bind” and “loose Satan,” meaning the spirits working in the name of Satan, through verbal command. This verbal command can be stated as “In the name of Jesus, I bind Satan from...I loose Satan from...” This would be a general, overall exercise of kingdom authority. However, the more precise that one is able to identify and name the spirit that is directly working in the name of and under the authority of Satan, the more precise and powerful will be the effectual exercise of this kingdom authority. This is illustrated in the power encounter of Jesus with the legion of demons. We are told that Jesus “*had been saying to him, ‘Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!’*” (Mark 5:8). The Greek translated “*had been saying*” is the imperfect tense, which means that Jesus did not merely say it one time but was continuing to give the verbal command. However, as is evident from the passage, the general command of “*Come out, you unclean spirit*” by Jesus was not having the effect He wanted and so He then “*was asking him, ‘What is your name?’*” to which the response was given, “*My name is Legion; for we are many*” (Mark 5:9). Upon gaining more precise identification of the spirit by the knowledge of its name, Jesus gained

greater ground to exercise authority over it and over them. Thus, while the general, overall verbal command of “I bind and/or loose Satan” can be effective in the exercise of authority over spirits, the more precise the identification of the name of the individual spirit that is working in an area where one has jurisdictional authority, the greater will be the effectual exercise of the key of the kingdom to bind and/or loose the spirits.