



The Government of God

SERIES

God's Government

- Foundational Principle # 7
 - God's government advances through delegated authority.



God's Government

- Throughout Scripture God delegates authority:
 - Adam was delegated authority to steward creation in Genesis 1:28.
 - Moses was delegated authority to lead Israel out of Egypt.
 - The Judges were delegated authority to deliver Israel from her enemies.

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- **Throughout Scripture God delegates authority:**
 - **The Kings were delegated authority to lead the kingdom of Israel.**
 - **The Prophets were delegated authority to correct Israel and to counsel its leaders.**
 - **The Apostles were delegated authority to lead the early Church, and they are still authorized to lead the Church.**

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- Throughout Scripture God delegates authority:
 - Elders are delegated authority to steward and care for the Church (Acts 20:28).
 - Parents are delegated authority to raise their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).
 - Civil government is delegated to levy taxes and keep evil in check by bearing the sword (Romans 13).

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- Authority is delegated, not independent.
 - Matthew 8:8-10 tells the story of the centurion's servant (NKJV) – *Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented." And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You*

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- **Matthew 8:8-10 (cont'd) – *should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!”***

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- Jesus marveled at the centurion's understanding of God's government. Even his own disciples didn't understand how the government of God operated, but this Roman did.



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- How did Jesus teach His disciples authority?
 - He took them to the Gates of Hell for an object lesson.
- In ancient times, the elders of a city would gather at the gates to make determinations about various things brought before them.
 - They might judge the rightful ownership of someone's livestock or settle a property dispute.

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- **Some examples of gates in Scripture include:**
 - **Gates of Sheol (Job 17:16)**
 - **Gates of Death (Job 38:17, Psalm 9:13, Psalm 107:18)**
 - **Gates of Bronze (Psalm 107:16-20, Isaiah 45:2)**
 - **Gates of Hades or Hell (Matthew 16:18-19)**

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- In Greek, Hell was the name for the underworld to which all the dead departed, not just unbelievers.
- The Hebrew equivalent to this word is *Sheol*, the place under the earth where all went after this life ended.
 - Sheol had bars (Job 17:16).
 - Cords to tie down its inhabitants (2 Samuel 22:5-6).
 - Both the righteous and the unrighteous went to Sheol.

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- In Matthew 16:17-19, Jesus takes his disciples to Caesarea Philippi and He tells them, *“Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*

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- **Matthew 16:17-19 (continued) – *And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.***

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- Matthew 16 takes place in Caesarea Philippi, situated near a mountainous region containing Mount Hermon.
- The following excerpt is taken from *What Did Jesus Mean by Gates of Hell?* by Michael Hesier.
 - At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus and his disciples would have seen the largest rock formation in Israel with pagan statues and at least fourteen temples in the background.

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- Caesarea Philippi stood only twenty-five miles from the religious communities of Galilee. In the Old Testament, this region was known as Bashan—a place with a sinister reputation.



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- According to the Old Testament, Bashan was controlled by two kings—Sihon and Og—who were associated with the ancient giant clans: the Rephaim and the Anakim (Deut 2:10–12; Josh 12:1–5).
 - The two main cities of their kingdom were Ashtaroth and Edrei, home to the Rephaim (Deut 3:1, 10–11; Josh 12:4–5).

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- These cities and their Rephaim inhabitants are mentioned by name in Canaanite (Ugaritic) cuneiform tablets.
 - The people of Ugarit believed the Rephaim were the spirits of dead warrior-kings.
 - They also believed that the cities of Ashtaroth and Edrei were the entryway to the Underworld—the gates of Sheol.

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- Also, during Israel's divided kingdom period, Jereboam built a pagan religious center at Dan—just south of Mount Hermon—where the Israelites worshiped Baal instead of Yahweh.



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- The early Canaanites worshiped Baal at Baniyas, and prisoners were thrown into the “Gates of Hell”, to determine guilt for a crime. Ferocious waters gushed from a very large spring of this limestone cave.
 - In ancient times, the water was fast-moving and would have propelled the bodies over the rocks, and death was guaranteed.

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- For the disciples, Bashan was an evil, otherworldly domain. But they had two other reasons to feel queasy about where they were standing.
 - According to Jewish tradition, Mount Hermon was the location where the *Bene Elohim*, the divine sons of God had descended from heaven—ultimately corrupting humankind via their offspring with human women (see Gen 6:1–4).

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- These offspring were known as Nephilim, ancestors of the Anakim and the Rephaim (Num 13:30–33).
- In Jewish theology, the spirits of these giants were demons (1 Enoch 15:1–12).



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- **To make the region even spookier, Caesarea Philippi had been built and dedicated to Zeus.**
 - **This pagan god was worshiped at a religious center built a short distance from the more ancient one in Dan—at the foot of Mount Hermon.**
 - **Aside from the brief interlude during the time of Joshua through Solomon, the gates of hell were continually open for business.**

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- Caesarea Philippi became the religious center for worship of the Greek god, *Pan*.
 - The Greeks named the city *Panias* in his honor.
 - To the pagan mind, the cave at Caesarea Philippi created a gate to the underworld, where fertility gods lived during the winter.
 - They committed detestable acts to worship these false gods.

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- **Caesarea Philippi's location was especially unique because it stood at the base of a cliff where spring water flowed.**
- **At one time, the water ran directly from the mouth of a cave set in the bottom of the cliff.**

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- The pagans of Jesus' day commonly believed that their fertility gods lived in the underworld during the winter and returned to earth each spring.
 - They saw water as a symbol of the underworld and thought that their gods traveled to and from that world through caves.

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- To the pagan mind, the cave and spring water at Caesarea Philippi created a gate to the underworld.
 - They believed that their city was literally at the gates of the underworld, or hell.
 - In order to entice the return of their god, Pan, each year, the people of Caesarea Philippi engaged in horrible deeds, including prostitution and sexual interaction between humans and goats.

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- It was in this cave the worshipers threw their slaughtered goats into the powerful waters.
 - The sacrifice was accepted by Pan if the goat sank.
 - If the goat floated, it meant Pan had rejected their offering, and the worshipers were required to purchase another goat and try again.

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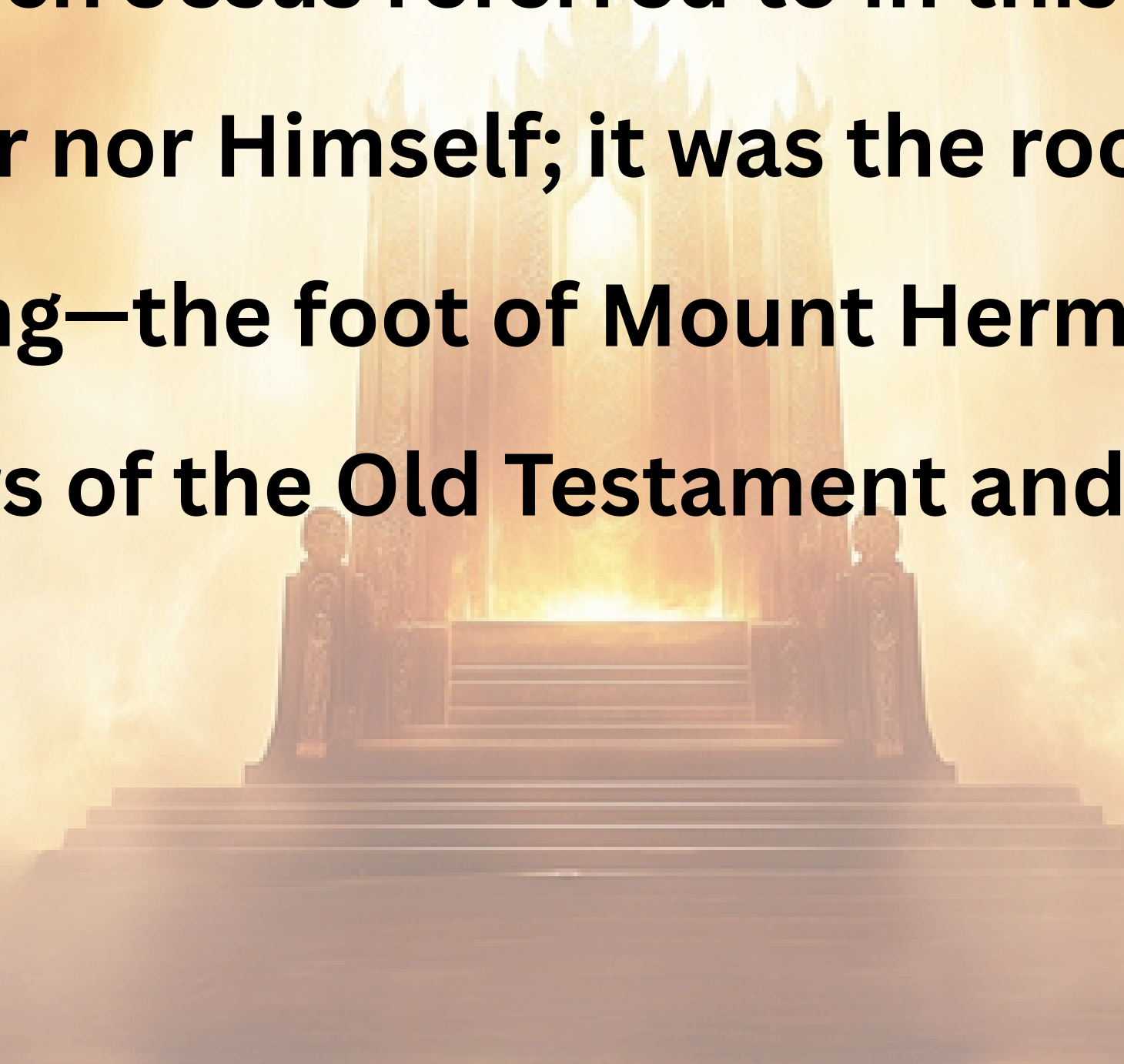
- The goat carcasses were likely retrieved, and their meat was sold in the commercial area of Caesarea Philippi, as was the practice of many pagans in ancient times.
- It was said the waters of the Cave of Pan were always colored red from the blood.

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- When Jesus brought his disciples to the area, they must have been shocked.
 - Caesarea Philippi was like a red-light district in their world and devout Jews would have avoided any contact with the despicable acts committed there.

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- The rock which Jesus referred to in this passage was neither Peter nor Himself; it was the rock on which they were standing—the foot of Mount Hermon, the demonic headquarters of the Old Testament and the Greek world.

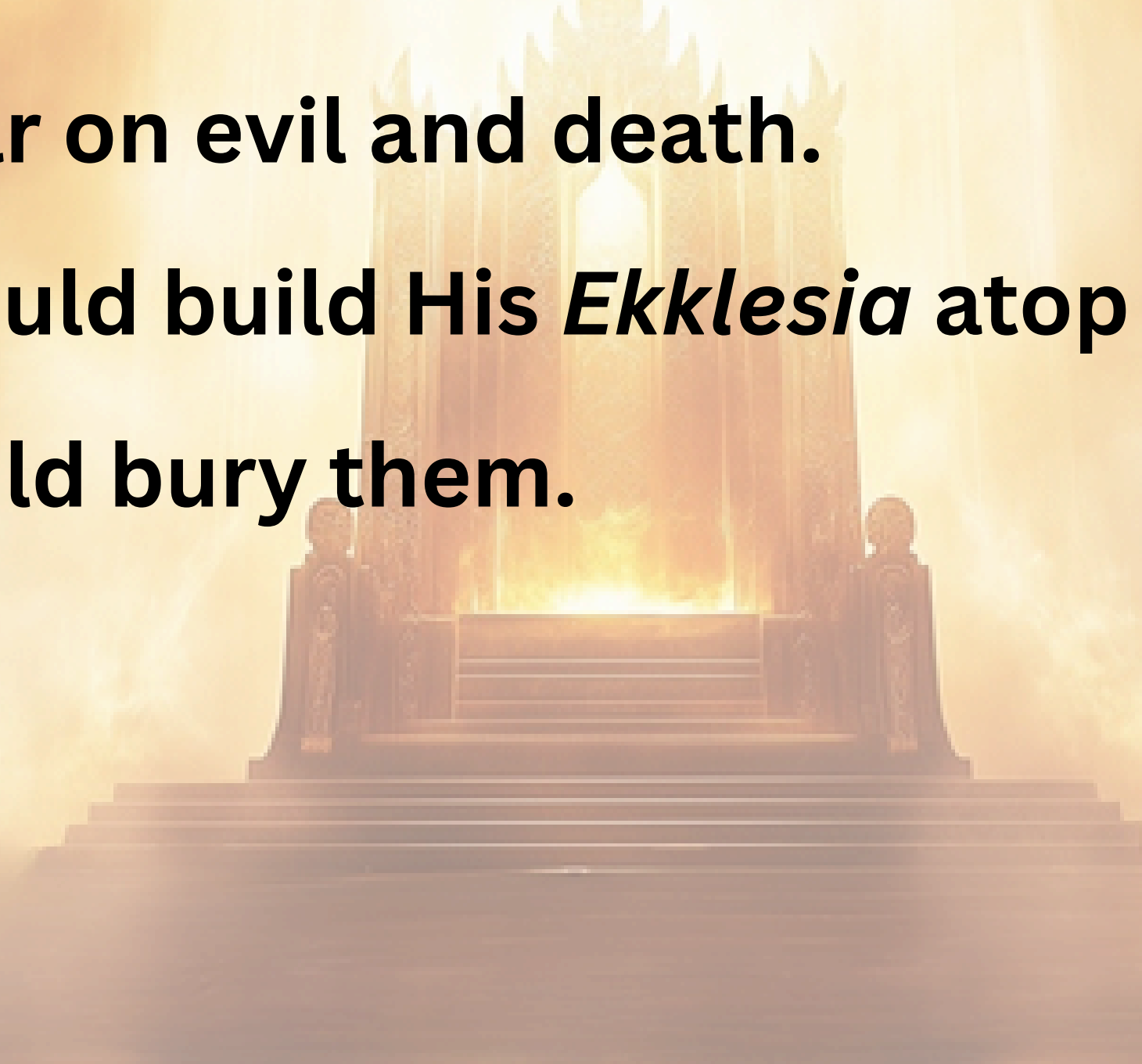


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- We often presume that the phrase “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” describes a Church taking on the onslaught of evil. But the word “against” is not present in the Greek translation.
 - Translating the phrase without the word “against” gives it a completely different connotation: “the gates of hell will not withstand it.”

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- It is the *Ekklesia* that Jesus sees as the aggressor. He was declaring war on evil and death.
 - Jesus would build His *Ekklesia* atop the gates of hell
 - He would bury them.



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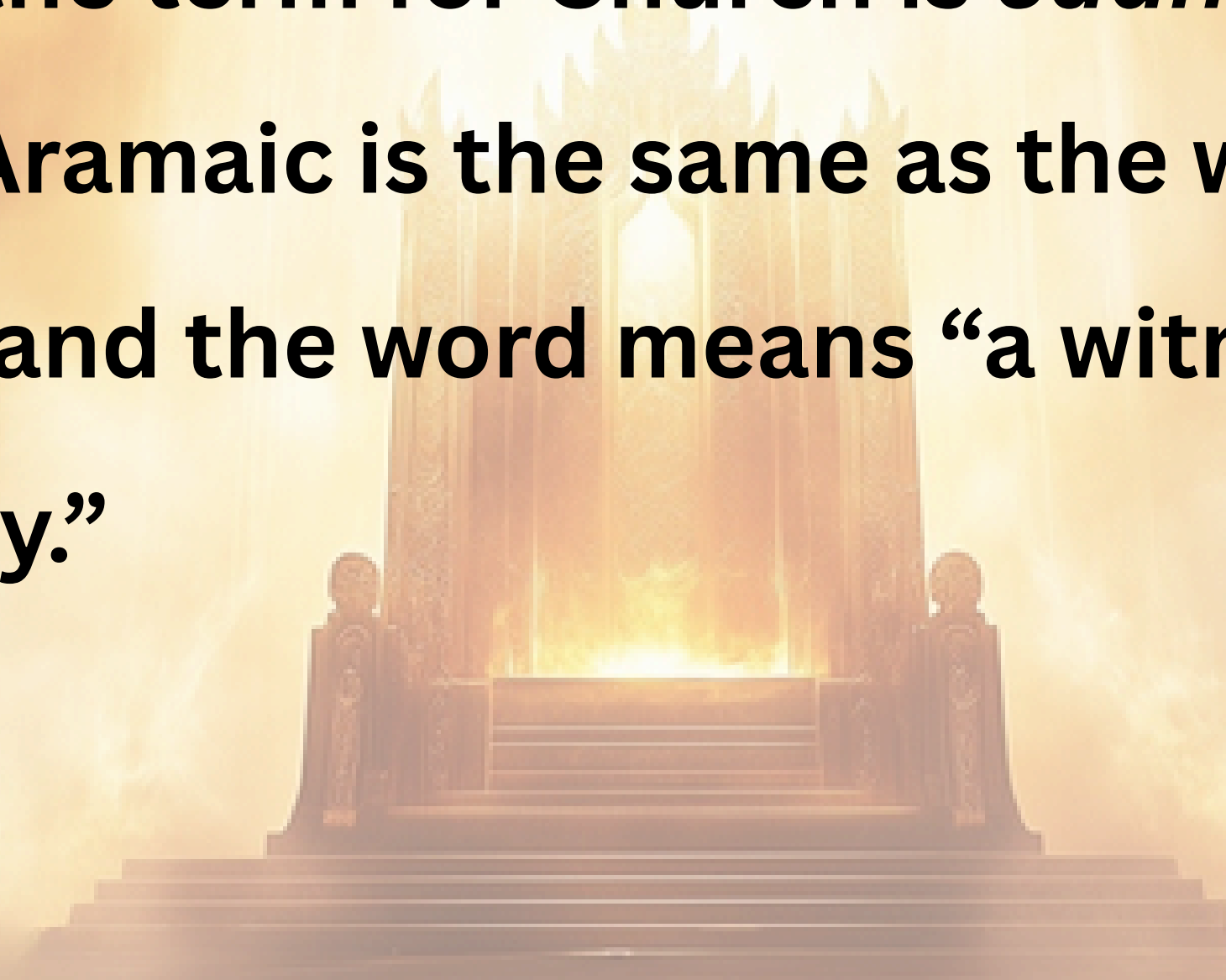
- Gates were defensive structures in the ancient world.
 - By saying that the gates of hell would not overcome, Jesus suggested that those gates were going to be attacked.
 - In other words, Jesus didn't want his followers hiding from evil.
 - He wanted them to storm the gates of hell.

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- Most of the New Testament was originally written in Aramaic, not Greek as commonly believed.
 - The Gospel writers were for the most part Jews, and the common language of the day was Aramaic (a language very similar to Hebrew).
 - The term *Ekklesia* is understood as an “assembly of called out ones” in Greek, but we know today the *Ekklesia* is much more than that.

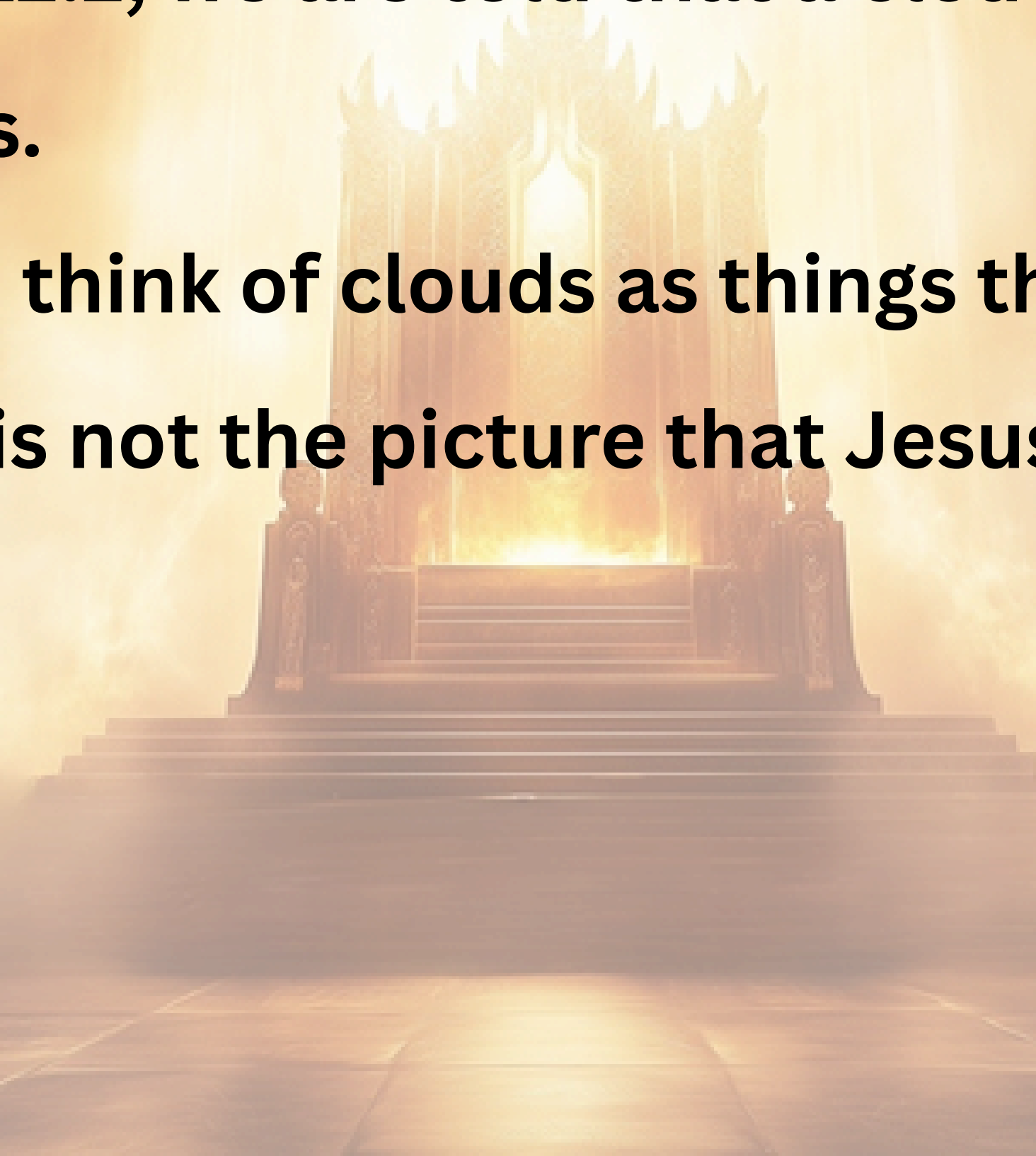
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- In Aramaic, the term for Church is *edah*.
 - *Edah* in Aramaic is the same as the word *edah* in Hebrew, and the word means “a witness or testimony.”



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- In Hebrews 12:2, we are told that a cloud of witnesses surrounds us.
 - We often think of clouds as things that float around, but that is not the picture that Jesus was painting for us.



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- Witnesses show up in court.
- Witnesses testify of the matters at hand.
 - The witnesses that Jesus is referring to is a group that has a duty to deal with enforcing lawful judgments that bind parties to an agreement, and with getting unlawful judgments dissolved or loosed.
 - The picture is of someone legally binding a party to the details contained in an agreement.

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- In other words, what Jesus was telling us is that the *Ekklesia* is authorized to impose the will of heaven upon the earth realm through righteous judgments.
 - We can destroy, dissolve, dismiss, or put off things that have no right to be in existence.

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- The implication in Matthew 16:19 is that the Ekklesia's authority includes all things because Scripture says “whatever” you bind on earth will be bound and “whatever” you loose on earth will be loosed.

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- How do we know what the limits of our authority are?
 - If it is permitted in Heaven, it can be permitted on earth.
 - If it is not permitted in Heaven, then it should not be permitted on earth.
 - This is how the Ekklesia adjudicates in the earth realm.

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- Through the power of Holy Spirit, we are still witnesses today of Jesus' words in Matthew 16:18-19 that the gates of hell shall not prevail.
- Through the power of Holy Spirit, we still testify against these gates that they have no authority and they cannot stand against us.

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- Jesus was teaching his disciples that the gates of hell are where the Ekklesia rules.
 - Joseph Mattera, in his book *Ruling in the Gates*, says that “Jesus makes it absolutely clear in Matthew 16:18 that His will for the Ekklesia is to displace the power base of the enemy with His rule. These gates are the main power base of cities.

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- **Joseph Mattera (continued) – They are the place where the leaders of the city meet to make decisions, set policy, place leadership, and declare war.”**
 - **The gates of hell are the place where we are called to rule.**
 - **The gates of hell are the place where we are to call things legal and illegal.**

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- The gates of hell are the place where we are to call in-bounds and out of bounds.
- The gates of hell are the place where we are to decide the matters that matter.
- The gates of hell are the place where we are called to adjudicate or make judgments on behalf of the King and the kingdom.

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- **Key Takeaway: Every authority remains accountable to God, whether inside the Church or outside it. All authority belongs to God through His Son Jesus Christ.**
 - **Jesus said in Matthew 28:18 (NKJV) – *All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.***