

Church Leadership and Government (Part 1)
Selected Scriptures
January 18, 2015

Introduction

We defined last week the meaning of church: Congregation of professing believers in Christ meeting regularly at a location under the care of the elders, observing the Lord's ordinances, and continuing the apostle's doctrine. There are many people who meet together for Bible Study or attend a weekend conferences, but those events are not the church because the people are not under the care of the elders. Today and the next few weeks we will be looking at what the Bible says about church leadership and church government.

As I've said before, the Bible does not really give us a detailed listing of what the church should look like. It does not give us minute details about how to run a business meeting or what vision we are to have for any communities. In fact, God has given the church great deal of freedom to operate in this world. However, the Bible does give us some details about church leadership and government.

Before we start, I just want to mention that I do not advocate the Presbyterian style church government where the elders have the final say in church business and issues. I am a Baptist and I believe that the congregation has the final authority in church business and issues. I will explain with Biblical support in the next few weeks how I came to this conclusion. However, I also believe that Scripture is clear on elder / deacon offices, and I also believe that the Bible teaches the plurality of elders. Does that mean that what we are practicing is sinful—not necessarily because as I said from the outset, God has given the church a great deal of freedom to govern herself.

Again for the next few weeks, we will be studying what Scripture tells us about church leadership and government.

I. Elders in the NT

- Greek word—*presbuteros* (From which we get Presbyterian)
 - 1 of 2 offices described in NT: elders and deacons
 - Used 20 times in conjunction to the office of elder
- Elders used in NT
 - Jerusalem

Acts 15:4 *When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them. (cf Acts 11:30; 15:2, 5, 22-23; 16:4; 21:18)*

- Lystra, Iconium, Antioch

Acts 14:21-23 *They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, **22** strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. **23** Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.*

- Ephesus

Acts 20:17 *From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church.*

- Crete

Titus 1:5 *The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.*

- James

James 5:14 *Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.*

- Peter

1 Peter 5:1 *To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed:*

- Interchangeable terms

- Shepherd, pastor, bishop, overseer, elder—all are used interchangeably
- **Ephesians 4:11**

Ephesians 4:11 *It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,*

- Pastor = *poimen* in Greek
- Means shepherd

1 Peter 2:25 *For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

- Shepherd = *poimen*
- **Acts 20:17, 28**

Acts 20:17, 28 *From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. 28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His own blood.*

- To shepherd = verb of shepherd = *poimaino* in Greek
- Also used as “to feed” or “to take care of”

John 21:16 *Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love Me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, You know that I love You." Jesus said, "Take care of My sheep."*

- Overseers = bishop = *episkopos* in Greek (where we get Episcopal)
- **1 Peter 5:1,2**

1 Peter 5:1-2 *To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: 2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to*

serve;

- Elders are to be pastors of God's people
- They are to be overseers
- **Titus 1:7, 1 Timothy 3:1**

Titus 1:7 *Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.*

1 Timothy 3:1 *It is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.*

- 1 Elder or Plural Elders
 - From what we have read so far, plural elders

Philippians 1:1 *Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus. To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:*

1 Timothy 4:14 *Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.*

James 5:14 *Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.*

- It seems that the churches were pastored (shepherded) by elders
 - The early church began with 12 Apostles as elders
 - Paul commands Titus to establish elders for each church

Titus 1:5 *The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.*

- How many?
- Bible does not say

Next week: Qualifications and Responsibilities of Elders and Deacons