

STEP BY STEP

Part Seven in a Series of Eight



7. The Organisation Of The Church

THE CHURCH MUST BE ORGANISED

'caring for **PEOPLE** for **PEOPLE** matter to God' Romans 5:8

ONE KING FOR HIS KINGDOM

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the area where there is most disagreement in the religious world today is in the organization of the church.

Various models for church government exist, each one giving differing amounts of power and authority to different groups of men. Some have a structure, which is like a pyramid with one individual at the top ultimately controlling the whole church. In others, the power is controlled by a small group of individuals who hold authority over the whole church.

It is not our intention to debate the relative merits of each system. Rather our purpose is to return to the Scriptures to see what pattern for church government is revealed by God.

THE ONE KING OVER THE KINGDOM

The first point to make is that the church has a Head, and He must be the undisputed ruler over the whole church.

LET US NOTE THE BIBLICAL PATTERN

1. Matthew 28:18-20 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

In this great statement of the Great Commission, we see that Jesus claims absolute authority for Himself.

2. Matthew 16:18 'And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock **I will build my church**, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.'

Note how Jesus describes the church. It is His church. It is truly the Church of Christ. It belongs to Him.

3. Please Read Ephesians 1:15-23.

HIS WILL FOR HIS CHURCH

Ephesians 5:23 'For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour.'

Note that the authority of Jesus over the church is absolute. There is one Head. There is one body. Jesus is the one head over the church. The church is His one body.

This speaks of the intimate relationship between Christ and His church. It also is a wonderful picture of the unity that the church has with the Lord. The Lord ultimately must exercise control over His own body. If anything is to be accomplished in the cause of Christ, it will be done by the body being obedient to every impulse of its Head.

4. Colossians 1:17-18 'He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.'

There are a great many parallels between the **Ephesian** and **Colossian** epistles.

Here we find a parallel statement to the one above. He is the Head of the body! That in all things He might take the first place of importance, that His will might be above all else. This is true because it is after all His church.

WHAT MAN IS THERE WHOSE WILL SHOULD SUPPLANT HIS OR TAKE SOME PLACE OF IMPORTANCE ABOVE HIS, OR TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER HIS WILL FOR THE CHURCH?

He is not dead that He needs to be replaced. He lives! He rules! He is still King over his Kingdom, the church.

THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL AND THE CHURCH LOCAL

There are two senses in which the word 'church' is used in the New Testament. It can be used to refer to the church, the **called-out of God** throughout the world.

It is in that sense we have been discussing up till now. It can also be used to describe a single congregation of that worldwide church. We want to go on now to distinguish between these and see what is said about the organization of the church universal and the organization of the church local.

THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL AND LOCAL

5. The Church Universal.

The organization of the church universal is utterly simple. There is Christ as the Head and each congregation of believers under the Head. The New Testament knows of no other form of organization above the congregational level.

There are no indications of councils being appointed to govern regions of the church. There are no indications of men appointed to rule over several congregations of the church. All such positions are the inventions of men.

Indeed, much difficulty, many problems have been caused down through the ages by men assuming positions of power and influence that the New Testament does not sanction. The modern pictures of church government that we see today evolved under the direction and influence of mere men.

Christians advocate returning to the pattern for church government seen in the New Testament. Some would advocate that such a simple pattern just would not work. They are clearly mistaken on two grounds.

Firstly, it works because God commanded it and His pattern must be the best. **Secondly** it works because it is seen to be working.

CAN WE REALLY IMPROVE ON GOD'S PATTERN FOR CHURCH GOVERNMENT?

6. The Church Local.

Next we turn to the pattern for church government in the local church. There are various functions mentioned with reference to the local church. These are, **Elders, Deacons, Evangelists, Members**.

AN ELDER IS A BISHOP, PASTOR AND OVERSEER

Someone might say, 'but doesn't the Bible also mention bishops, pastors, and overseers?' However, these are all descriptive terms for the same office, that of the elder. The elder oversees the work of the church (**i.e. the term bishop**); he is also the shepherd or pastor of the flock.

Please **Read** and note how in **Titus 1:5-7**, the terms elder and bishop are used interchangeably and are obviously referring to the same person.

a. Elders: Please **Read Titus 1:5**

We note that Paul instructed the young evangelist Titus what must be done with reference to the churches on the island of Crete. They had been established but their leadership was as yet unformed. Titus is told that the situation as it was defective at that point in time until they had appointed elders in every church. Those who were to provide spiritual leadership for the church were the elders.

It is worth noting that we never read in the New Testament of a single elder being appointed in a congregation. They are always discussed in the plural. We can easily see God's wisdom in not asking any one individual to take such a responsibility.

b. Elders: Please **Read Acts 20:28-31**

We note that the role of the elders was to feed the church spiritually, and to guard the church from false teachers. Hence the elders had to be men of spiritual quality and leadership, who understood the Word of Truth and were able to teach and lead others in the way of righteousness.

We note in this passage that the first departures from the Truth were predicted to occur in the area of church leadership.

c. Elders: Please **Read 1 Peter 5:1-3**

They were to tend the flock.

RULERS OVER THE LOCAL CONGREGATION

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

It indicates that they will determine the directions in which the flock should go, where they will find pasture (**sound feeding on the Word**), and where they will be in safety (**not led away into dangerous paths**).

Also we see that though they are to rule over the local congregation it must be regarded rather as leadership. The elders will lead the church from the front, by being themselves mature spiritual Christians; they will lead others along those paths also.

d. Elders: Please **Read Titus 1:5-9** and **1 Timothy 3:1-7**

These two passages teach the qualifications required of the elder. We see that certain of these qualities concern his family and life situation and others concern his spiritual family situation. It would be remiss of us to fail to recognize such people in our midst that might be appointed to the eldership. Further it would be remiss of us to appoint men to guide and lead the church who do not meet such qualifications.

e. Deacons: Please **Read Acts 6:1-6**

Although the word deacon is not specifically used in this passage, it is widely understood that this is the account of the appointment of the first deacons in the church.

The word simply means a servant. It comes from the word meaning to run or hasten and came to mean an attendant or servant. Hence these were men who were specially appointed servants of the church. In this case we see that they were appointed to look after a specific function within the church.

Further we note that they were selected by the congregation and then appointed by the apostles. They were to take care of certain matters to allow the apostles to concentrate on the teaching and preaching of the Word of God.

GOD'S CHURCH ORGANISED GOD'S WAY

f. Deacons: Please [Read 1 Timothy 3:8-13](#)

Again we note that there are specifically laid down qualifications for deacons. If you are having any difficulty with this, a more experienced Christian will be happy to help you see the difference.

g. Evangelists: Please [Read Ephesians 4:11](#)

Amongst the roles discussed in the early church during the time of the apostles was the role of an evangelist. The term means a proclaimer of Good News. It is manifest that though all Christians are proclaimers of the good news of the gospel, there was a recognized position in the church where those of particular abilities in this area were recognized for their work.

h. Evangelists: Please [Read 2 Timothy 4:1-5](#)

We note that the role involves more than just preaching to the lost and baptizing ([As Philip the evangelist did in Acts 8:12 and Acts 8:38](#)). It involves teaching and reproofing the church and doing so with the full authority of the Word.

i. Evangelists: Please [Read Titus 1:5](#)

Titus the evangelist was instructed to make the church ready for the appointment of elders. Hence we see a general leadership role to bring the church to some kind of maturity in order that scriptural leadership may be appointed.

j. Evangelists: Please [Read 1 Timothy 6:20-21](#)

They are to guard the truth of the gospel and present it to others. Many false teachers had arisen and still arise. The work of the evangelist is to maintain the purity of the Word taught and lead others into the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. Evangelists have to know the Word, handle it correctly and teach others to do so. [2 Timothy 2:15](#).

k. Members: Please [Read 1 Timothy 5:17-18](#)

Members of the church will want to honour the elders and leadership of the congregation. The leadership of the church will provide guidance and pastoral care to support them in their Christian life.

l. Members: Please [Read Hebrews 13:17](#)

God gives us the responsibility of obeying the leaders of the church, following their leadership in order that all might work cohesively together to further the cause of Christ.

CONCLUSION

Note the following points in summary about the organization of the church:

The one Head of the church is Christ.

Under Christ the church is organized in congregations.

There is no known structure above the congregational level in Scripture.

Each congregation should have a plurality of elders.

Each elder must meet the qualifications for eldership.

Deacons may be appointed to carry out useful functions in the church.

Each deacon should meet the qualifications for deacons.

Evangelists may be appointed to preach and teach the Word.

Members should honour and follow the spiritual leadership of the church.

EVALUATION SHEET

Please go ahead and fill in the evaluation sheet attached.

CONTACT DETAILS

Email: info@the-scriptures.co.uk

This study was written by © Alastair Ferrie

EVALUATION SHEET

Step by Step Lesson 7

(Please type or write your answers within the lines provided)

Name:

Home Address or Email address:

QUESTIONS:

(Please reply with your answers via e-mail or a separate sheet of paper.)

Write down the qualifications laid down for elders and deacons. The scripture references are below.

Can you notice any differences between the qualifications laid down for eldership and the qualifications laid down for deacons?

Elders Qualifications 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9

Deacons Qualifications 1 Timothy 3:8-13

Differences Between Elders and Deacons Qualifications

SENDING YOUR ANSWERS

Once we have received your evaluation sheet we will send you the **next study** in the series.

Please return your completed evaluation sheet as an email attachment to info@the-scriptures.co.uk