

## A Biblical Study on Church Governance:

### *God's Rule as King over Creation, Man, and the Church*

*Paul to Timothy on the Church at Ephesus: ...I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. 1 Timothy 3:15*

God the Father, by the Holy Spirit, and through His Word and Son, Jesus the Christ, created all things.<sup>1</sup> Since He created all, all belongs to Him. God rules as Sovereign King<sup>2</sup> over all creation, but He delegated His authority over creation on earth to Mankind<sup>3</sup> – who almost immediately fell into sin and willingly gave up their authority to the enemy (satan).<sup>4</sup> After God delivered Noah through the flood, man ruled creation through fear<sup>5</sup> and God gave to mankind the right to rule and judge over mankind.<sup>6</sup> At the Tower of Babel, God divided Mankind into people groups and nations each with their own rulers/kings<sup>7</sup>...but God adopted Israel as His own kingdom.<sup>8</sup> God made a covenant with Abraham that He would bless him and that through Abraham's seed (ie. Jesus, see Gal 3:16 below) all the families of the earth would be blessed.<sup>9</sup> God left the rest of mankind to serve their idols, but He was God and King to His people Israel.<sup>10</sup> Jacob prophesied that the scepter (ie. rulership) of God's people would reside with the tribe of Judah until "shiloh" (literally "which to whom it" *belongs*) comes<sup>11</sup>-- many years later God chose David from the tribe of Judah and his descendant Jesus for eternal rulership over Israel.<sup>12</sup>

God raised up one man, Moses, to deliver His people from slavery in Egypt, but he balked at this work,<sup>13</sup> so God gave him helpers to do the work...Aaron as his spokesman and priest before God, and Joshua as his servant.<sup>14</sup> God did not intend to send Moses before Pharaoh alone, He told Moses to take the elders with him to confront Pharaoh.<sup>15</sup> After God used Moses to deliver Israel, Moses was being worn out by the secular daily task of judging the people, so he appointed elders from among the people to help him judge the people.<sup>16</sup> This change in leadership was not initiated by God, but was a wise move which relieved Moses' burden and was blessed by God.

It was Moses and these elders of Israel, along with the whole congregation of Israel who ordained Aaron as High Priest along with his sons.<sup>17</sup> Later when the people complained about the lack of meat, fish, fresh fruit and vegetables (for the manna was not good enough to them and they became greedy),<sup>18</sup> Moses became discouraged over the burden of being *the lone spiritual leader* of Israel.<sup>19</sup> So Moses stated to God, "I alone am not able to carry all this people, because it is too burdensome for me (Numbers 11:14). Even though Moses had elders as judges, Aaron and sons as high priests, and Joshua as his assistant, Moses needed spiritual men to help him in leading Israel. So God told Moses to select a smaller group of men from among the elders to share his burden of leadership.

<sup>16</sup>The Lord therefore said to Moses, "**Gather for Me seventy men from the elders of Israel**, whom you know to be the elders of the people and their officers and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you..."<sup>25</sup>Then **the Lord came down** in the cloud and spoke to him; and **He took of the Spirit who was upon him and placed Him upon the seventy elders**. And when the Spirit rested upon them, **they prophesied**. But they did not do it again. Numbers 11:16...25<sup>20</sup>

When it was time to formalize the covenant with the LORD, He called Moses, Aaron, and these seventy elders to come worship Him on Mt Sinai and to eat a covenant meal with Him.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>8</sup>So **Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."**<sup>9</sup>Then **Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel,**<sup>10</sup>**and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself.**<sup>11</sup> Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; **and they saw God,**<sup>22</sup> **and they ate and drank.**<sup>12</sup> Now the Lord said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there,

and **I will give you the stone tablets** with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction.” Exodus 24:8–12

Upon entering the promised land, Joshua led Israel to renew the covenant with the LORD and the elders, officers, and their judges stood beside the priests next to the ark of the covenant as they read the Law of God (Joshua 8:30-35).<sup>23</sup> In the time of the Judges, it was the elders of Gilead who negotiated for Jephthah to lead them as judge/deliverer<sup>24</sup> and it was the elders of Israel who found wives for the surviving Benjamites after the civil war.<sup>25</sup>

It was the elders who came to Samuel the prophet to ask for a king to lead Israel.<sup>26</sup> It was the elders of Israel who negotiated to make David the king of Israel after Saul’s death.<sup>27</sup> *It is good here to note that even though Solomon deviated from the Biblical model of kingship presented in Deuteronomy 17:14-20, God blessed Solomon’s rule with wisdom, health, wealth, and peace. However this deviation from God’s standard led to Israel’s division after his death.* It was the elders of Israel who tried to counsel Solomon’s successor Rehoboam to treat the people kindly...to no avail.<sup>28</sup> And it was the elders of Israel and Judah who joined with good King Josiah in his efforts in initiating a spiritual revival/renewal in Judah.<sup>29</sup>

During the Babylonian exile, God called Jeremiah to send His message in a letter to the elders of the people – not to the exiled king.<sup>30</sup> After the exile, it was the elders of the Jews who responded to the prophets Haggai and Zechariah and helped Zerubbabel and Jeshua to rebuild the Temple.<sup>31</sup>

In biblical times, kings and elders were viewed by both God and the people as shepherds of the people of God.<sup>32</sup> Shepherds guard their sheep from wild animals and dangers.<sup>33</sup> Shepherds serve, protect, and care for their sheep. Shepherds lead their sheep to green pastures and quiet waters.<sup>34</sup> Shepherds gently lead sheep by their voice not by coercion or force.<sup>35</sup> Jesus utilizes this imagery and calls Himself the Good Shepherd.<sup>36</sup> In later New Testament books, Jesus is also called the Chief Shepherd,<sup>37</sup> the Great Shepherd,<sup>38</sup> and the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.<sup>39</sup> After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to Peter on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and called Peter to serve Him as His under-shepherd. He appealed to Peter’s love for Jesus to “tend” (2x) and “shepherd” (1x) Jesus’ sheep.<sup>40</sup> Jesus’ sheep are those who believe in Him...He calls them “His Church.”<sup>41</sup> Jesus Christ is the ruler (head) of His Church.<sup>42</sup>

So the Church is not a democracy but a holy, just, and benevolent Monarchy.<sup>43</sup> Just as God is revealed to be the King of Israel in the Old Testament (and as His prophesied coming Messianic Prophet<sup>44</sup>/Priest<sup>45</sup>/King<sup>46</sup> will rule), So Jesus, the son and heir of David,<sup>47</sup> is this prophesied Messianic King who was to come.<sup>48</sup> Once He had completed his high priestly work of redemption<sup>49</sup> at the cross,<sup>50</sup> Jesus arose from the grave<sup>51</sup> and ascended<sup>52</sup> to the Father and sat down on the Father’s throne<sup>53</sup> to rule with Him. One day in the future, He will return to rule on earth<sup>54</sup> as King of kings and Lord of lords.<sup>55</sup> Just before His ascension to heaven, Christ commissioned the Apostles to make disciples by spreading the Good News message of His Kingdom teachings and His Salvation offered through His work on the cross.<sup>56</sup>

While all Believers have the same faith<sup>57</sup> and hold equal standing before God,<sup>58</sup> we each have different spiritual gifts,<sup>59</sup> talents, and roles of service<sup>60</sup> to which we are called.<sup>61</sup> In the New Testament, God calls all believers to be unified in the Holy Spirit<sup>62</sup> to love each other,<sup>63</sup> and to serve each other.<sup>64</sup> When Christ ascended to Heaven He appointed believers with differing functions<sup>65</sup> within the Church in order to equip believers for service: **Apostles** (Lit. “sent one” or God’s ambassadors of the Gospel - those who actually sat under Jesus teaching on earth and commissioned by Him – these are no longer available to the Church), **Prophets**<sup>67</sup> (Those who communicate God’s will - usually with the spiritual gift of prophecy), **Evangelists**<sup>66</sup> (a talented proclaimer of the Gospel message - those who focus on the work of evangelism – *not listed elsewhere as a spiritual gift*), **Pastors** (those who shepherd/guard the Church – *not listed elsewhere as a spiritual gift*), and **Teachers**<sup>67</sup> (those who explain the Scriptures - one with the spiritual gift of teaching). Those called by Christ to shepherd His Church will, at the minimum, exhibit the gift/talent of Teaching and perhaps more of these. A plurality of elders allows for the Church to be blessed with a diversity of gifts among their leaders but all elders are equal and without a hierarchy, as under-shepherds of Christ, the Chief Shepherd of the Church.<sup>68</sup> In fact Paul seems to indicate that a lack of a plurality of elders is problematic (out of order) for churches in Crete.<sup>69</sup>

In His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus called the twelve Disciples/Apostles who were equal in status,<sup>70</sup> but of whom Peter seemed to be their spokesman.<sup>71</sup> This model was followed by the first church in Jerusalem where Peter was a leader and on the Elder council.<sup>72</sup> The elder council was led by James (the Apostle<sup>73</sup> - who was the brother of Jesus), other Apostles, and the elders of the church.<sup>74</sup> While this Elder leadership was a plurality, James appears as the lead Apostle/Elder<sup>75</sup> and spokesman for the council.<sup>76</sup> It seems there was/is always a first-among-equals in Elder leadership due to giftedness (see Peter/James/John among the Disciples; Paul and Barnabas; Paul and Silas, etc.). However, in leading the church of Jerusalem, the Elders had equal status and authority with each other, with James and with the Apostles.<sup>77</sup> This parity allowed for genuine accountability and restraint among the Elders as they lead.<sup>78</sup> The Elder council in Jerusalem openly and transparently debated and determined doctrine. They did everything transparently and in the open.<sup>79</sup> They spoke with a unified but plural voice<sup>80</sup> and they led in a unity of one mind, which was affirmed by the congregation.<sup>81</sup> If they could not be unified, either they deferred to the discernment of the majority, or they agreed to separate from each other.<sup>82</sup>

Wherever the Apostles went to spread the Gospel, many were converted and the new Christians began to meet together for worship and instruction.<sup>83</sup> However, these new Christians needed to be cared for, taught Christ's teachings, and fed the Word of God.<sup>84</sup> So the Apostles were led by God to appoint elders (plural) in every church<sup>85</sup> from among the believers to lead/teach/equip/care<sup>65</sup> for the churches and continue the work of Christ's great commission (Matt 28:18-20). Several churches are mentioned as having a plurality of elders: Jerusalem,<sup>86</sup> Antioch,<sup>87</sup> Perga, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lycaonia, Lystra, Derbe;<sup>88</sup> Ephesus;<sup>89</sup> All the city churches in Crete;<sup>90</sup> and Philippi.<sup>91</sup> Any time the role of elder is mentioned in a church context, it is plural. James, the brother of Jesus, when writing to the churches spread across the Roman world assumed all churches had a plurality of elders.<sup>92</sup> Peter, when writing to the churches scattered across Asia Minor<sup>93</sup> (modern Turkey) exhorts the elders (plural) among each church to shepherd the flock of God voluntarily with eagerness and humility.<sup>94</sup> When Paul speaks to the elders of the church at Ephesus, he calls them "Holy Spirit made overseers" stated that they were placed there "to shepherd" (verb, *the same root word as the noun for "pastor"*) the church of God.<sup>95</sup>

In the New Testament, the word most often translated as "elder(s)" is the Greek word *presbuteros*<sup>96</sup> (literally "elder or old man"). The term is translated within context in the sense of "elder leader" (39/66 times), "Christian elder" (18/66 times), "forefather" (4/66 times), "older man" (3/66 times), "older" (1/66 times), and one time as "older woman." The word is almost always in the plural (with the exception of when Peter or John refer to themselves as an elder in the singular;<sup>97</sup> or two times when reference is made to the elder council of the Jews<sup>98</sup>). A parallel term for *presbuteros*/elder in the New Testament is the Greek word *episkopos*/overseer. When speaking to the plural elders/*presbuteros* of the church at Ephesus, Paul says, "...The Holy Spirit has made you overseers/*episkopos*, to shepherd the church of God..." Paul also uses these two terms in parallel in Titus 1:5 and 1:7 where elders/*presbuteros* are being appointed and then afterward described as overseer/*episkopos* (God's *steward* over the church). So the term overseer/*episkopos* is a parallel term for the office and function of elders and not a separate office. It was not until the mid to late second century AD that churches began to separate the role of Elder into two positions (overseer and elder). Prior to this, Early Church writings indicate a plurality of elders who are also called at times "overseers."<sup>99</sup>

Paul speaks both to the qualifications for, and function of, church elders in several places.<sup>100</sup>

### Qualifications for Elders:

#### Basic Criteria<sup>101</sup> (Directly required **Gifts/Talents** in Bold)

- A mature Christian (1 Tim 3:6 - not a new convert)
- Devout – exemplary personal piety (Titus 1:8)
- Above reproach (1 Tim 3:2, Titus 1:6)
- The husband of one wife – a man (1 Tim 2:11-15; 3:2; Titus 1:6)
- Children who are believers (Titus 1:6)
- ...who are not wild and rebellious (Titus 1:6)
- A Good reputation outside of the church (1 Tim 3:7)

A Good Example for Believers to follow (1 Peter 5:3; Phil 3:17; 2 Thess. 3:9; 1 Tim 4:12; Titus 2:7)

#### Temperament

Temperate – restrained/level-headed (1 Tim 3:2)  
Prudent – self-controlled/thoughtful (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8)  
Self-controlled – emotionally (Titus 1:8)  
Respectable – having admirable qualities (1 Tim 3:2)  
Hospitable – friendly/kind/genial (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8)  
Peace loving (1 Tim 3:3)  
Gentle / Not pugnacious (rough) (1 Tim 3:3; Titus 1:7)  
Loving what is Good (Titus 1:8)  
Upright – Just/Fair (Titus 1:8)  
Not Arrogant / Stubborn (Titus 1:7)  
Not Quick-tempered (Titus 1:7)  
Not addicted to wine (1 Tim 3:3; Titus 1:7)  
Free from the love of Money/dishonest gain (1 Tim 3:3; Titus 1:7)

#### Required Talents/Gifts

**Manages/leads/rules his household well** (1 Tim 3:4-5)  
...keeps his children under control (1 Tim 3:4-5)  
Devoted to Sound Doctrine (Titus 1:9; Acts 20:21)  
A student of sound Bible teaching (Titus 1:9; Acts 20:20, 25)  
Have Good Knowledge of sound Bible Doctrine  
(Titus 1:9; Acts 20:27)  
**Able to Exhort in Sound Bible Doctrine** (Titus 1:9)  
**Able to Refute those who contradict Sound Bible Doctrine**  
(Titus 1:9)  
**Skilled to Teach the Bible & correct doctrine** – assumes skill to  
interpret correctly (1 Tim 3:2; Acts 20:20; Eph. 4:11)  
Able to silence rebellious men, empty talkers, and deceivers (Ti 1:10-11)

#### **Elders' Ministry:**

Prayer and the ministry of the Word of God (reading, study,  
teaching, preaching) (Acts 6:2, 4; 1 Tim 5:17)

- Determine the Proper Interpretation of Scripture / Correct Doctrine  
/ to Judge doctrinal error (Acts 15:1-29)

Shepherd/Guard and Feed the flock of God (John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28;  
1 Pet 5:2)

- **Teach (all Elders must Teach)**<sup>102</sup>  
*To observe* Jesus commands/*Make disciples* (Matt 28:18-20)  
*Teach/Instruct* the Bible to Believers (1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim 3:2;  
Eph. 4:11; Titus 1:9)  
*Exhort/Strongly Encourage* in Sound Bible Doctrine (Titus 1:9)
- **Reprove**  
*Reprove* errant believers – includes *Public Reproof*/Church discipline  
for the unrepentant (Titus 1:13; 1 Tim 5:20; Matt 18:15-20)
- **Correct**  
*Warn/Admonish* against Wrong Doctrine/Wrong actions (Acts 20:29-31; 1 Thess. 5:12)
- **Train in Righteousness**  
*Clothe* themselves with humility toward the flock (1 Peter 5:5)

- Be Examples* (ideal moral/spiritual) to the flock (1 Pet 5:3; Acts 20:35)
- Equip* the Saints for the Work of Service (Ephesians 4:12; service to others is service to Christ - Matt 25:31-46; 1 Peter 4:10-11)
- Stewardship of the Finances of the Church (Titus 1:7; Acts 11:30)
- Meet the Needs of the Flock (John 21:15-17)
  - Visit/Pray for/Anoint* the sick (James 5:14)
  - Help* the weak (Acts 20:35; Rom 15:1; Gal 6:2)
  - Give* of yourself to the Flock/Have a giving attitude (Acts 20:35 – “It is more blessed to give than to receive;” Luke 6:30, 11:41)
  - Keep watch* over their souls (Heb. 13:17)
- Be On Guard/Alert against perverse men/false teachers (Acts 20:28-31)
  - Refute* those who contradict Sound Bible Doctrine (Titus 1:9)
    - ...Savage Wolves/False teachers & False prophets from the outside (Matt 7:15; Acts 20:29; Eph. 5:6-14)
    - ...False teachers & False Prophets from the inside (Acts 20:30; Col 2:8; Rev 2:2)
  - Silence* rebellious men, empty talkers, and deceivers (Titus 1:10-11)
- Exercise oversight/leadership/rule over the flock under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, to seek God’s will & His kingdom and lead the Church toward that end (1 Tim 3:4; 1 Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:7; 1 Peter 5:1-2; 1 Tim 5:17; Matt 6:33)
  - ...*voluntarily* and with eagerness (1 Pet 5:2)
  - ...*not lording it* over the flock (1 Pet 5:3)
- Appoint / Lay hands on Deacons/Church Officers (1 Tim 5:21-22)
- Diligently labor among the flock (1 Thess. 5:12)

Likewise the early church in Jerusalem had a need for leaders in the ministry of service.<sup>103</sup> A dispute arose over the daily serving of food due to the Hellenistic Christian widows being neglected. So the Apostles tasked the congregation to set apart seven men, from among them, for the work of ministry. This would allow the Apostles to keep to their calling of prayer, the study of the scriptures, and teaching. These men were called *diakonos* which is merely transliterated into English as the term “deacon.”<sup>104</sup> The term *diakonos* literally means “one who serves” as an intermediary/agent. The term is twice mentioned as an “office.”<sup>105</sup> In his letter to the Philippians (1:1), Paul greets first the “saints”/congregation and then includes the offices of overseer/*episkopos* and that of servant/*diakonos* in his greeting. Paul gives the criteria for the office of deacon/*diakonos* in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Deacons were a plurality appointed for a specific ministry purpose. They were equal in status (no hierarchy/no chief) – sharing their specific ministry leadership with each other as servants of the Church.

## **Qualifications for Deacons:**

### Basic Criteria

- Filled with the Holy Spirit – all believers have the Holy Spirit, but not all live a consistently Spirit-led and Spirit-filled life (John 14:17; Acts 2:4; 6:3)<sup>106</sup>
- Full of Wisdom (Acts 6:3)
- Men of Dignity (1 Tim 3:8)
- A Good reputation (Acts 6:3)
- Beyond reproach (1 Tim 3:10)
- Holding to Faith in Christ with a clear conscience (1 Tim 3:9)
- Husband of one wife (1 Tim 3:12)
- Good manager of children (1 Tim 3:12)

Good manager of household (1 Tim 3:12)

A follower of sound doctrine (1 Tim 4:6 – Timothy is named a servant/*diakonos* in this passage)

Must be tested before service (1 Tim 3:10)

- Deacons Wives

Dignified (1 Tim 3:11)

Temperate (1 Tim 3:11)

Faithful in all things (1 Tim 3:11)

Not Gossips (1 Tim 3:11)

Temperament

Not double-tongued (1 Tim 3:8)

Not addicted to wine (1 Tim 3:8)

Free from love of dishonest gain (1 Tim 3:8)

**Deacon's Ministry:**

Service to the Physical/Temporal Needs of the Church.

To Serve in any way needed - Tables, Administer Finances for the Elders, etc (Acts 6:1ff; 1 Tim 3:13)

To convey alms, or physical needs to believers on mission or in churches in other cities (Phil 4:14-18)

To assist/serve the elders in the worship service – like the synagogue officials assisted the one teaching with the scrolls, etc.

As Messengers – Tychicus (Col 4:7), Epaphras (Col 1:2)

Personal Ministries of Deacons – Mentioned in Scripture

Encourager/Basic Instruction – Timothy highlighted the things that Paul was writing/teaching (1 Tim 4:6; 1 Thess. 3:2) -- but this is not described as a “teaching” ministry as with the case of elders.

Evangelism – Philip the Evangelist (Acts 6:5; Acts 8:5, 12, 26-35, 40; 1 Thess. 3:2)

Miracles/Healings/Demons cast out – Philip the Evangelist (Acts 8:6-7)

Baptism – Philip the Evangelist (Acts 8:12-13, 16, 36-39)

Deacons' wives to assist them in their ministry

## Summary

Each individual congregation is under the Sovereign rule/authority of the Lord Jesus Christ to whom they belong.<sup>107</sup> Since each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ, each individual member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord to make sure that all that done in and by the Church is Biblical/according to Christ's commands in Scripture. Each congregation is autonomous (independent from others)<sup>108</sup> operating under democratic processes and under no earthly ecclesiastical/denominational government. Churches may need to, and do, cooperate together in ministry and serve each other in times of need.

While a church may exist for a time without an Elder,<sup>109</sup> the New Testament standard for church governance is for a church to be led<sup>110</sup> by a group of biblically qualified (and diversely gifted) Elders raised up from among the congregation by the Holy Spirit as gifts from Christ to the Church<sup>111</sup> in order to serve as under shepherds of Christ. While Scripture here counters our current Southern Baptist model (see more below), to do anything but strive to be consistent with Scripture, is to deny the wisdom and will of Christ who led the Apostles to appoint a plurality of Elders in every New Testament church. Elders are equal in office/status and authority and share leadership. There is no Biblical distinction between the terms for Elder, overseer, and pastor/shepherd in regard to the Church. There is no distinction between Elders who teach and Elders who rule – they must do both. Elders have the authority and ministry of teaching/preaching the word of God and

determining sound doctrine, as they shepherd (teach, reprove [including church discipline], correct, train/equip, keep watch over, protect from false teachers, and humbly lead) the church. The distribution of responsibilities among Elders should be guided by their diversity of gifts and their effective influence. Whatever the Elders do, it must be Biblical and according to the will of Christ. The Elders who work hard at teaching and preaching should be financially supported – however, some Elders may be bi-vocational or self-supporting.<sup>112</sup>

The majority consent of the congregation and its Eldership “is required for every act where the church as a whole has a voice.”<sup>113</sup> The extent of this congregational oversight needs to be determined by the Church (i.e. which issues are to be voted upon by the congregation). This open and transparent dual affirmation is needed for the church to move forward in unity.<sup>114</sup> The congregation participates in the *governance* of the church<sup>115</sup> through (but not limited to): (1) voting/participating in the Elder & Deacon selection/removal process,<sup>116</sup> (2) voting on issues brought before them (including Church discipline), (3) obedience to the Elders leadership, and (4) submission to the Scriptures as well as the Elders authority in carrying out Scriptural teaching (ie. Church discipline, etc.).<sup>117</sup> While a member’s conscience is their own and without compulsion, it must be said that the members of the congregation do not have the right to vote for any Elder or Deacon candidate who exhibits character in any way differing from the biblical requirements (ie. unqualified as presented above). Nor does a member have the right to vote against an Elder/Deacon candidate who is qualified. Nor should they vote to remove an Elder or Deacon who remains qualified or refuse to vote out an Elder or Deacon found unqualified. The same is true with voting for any issue which is contrary to the teaching of Scripture; or against any issue which is clearly biblical. While the burden of leadership falls on the plurality of Elders, the final authority and burden of responsibility rests with the congregation, and as Christ’s congregation we all serve Him...as we are a “Kingdom of Priests” to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.<sup>118</sup>

Deacons are called from among the congregation to actively lead in ministries of service to the church. The individual members of the congregation are gifted by the Holy Spirit to serve powerfully among the congregation. They are to be equipped to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, bear fruit through good works, and increase in the knowledge of God - filling out the necessary ministry work of service to the church and reflecting Christ as salt and light in the marketplace.<sup>119</sup>

## **The Elephant in the Room**

So this study begs a few questions? So How did the church move from a plural elder church governance to what we have today? How does what we have today compare to this biblical model? Why don’t more churches have a plurality of Elders? And Why do we need a plurality of Elders?

## **How did the Church move away from the Biblical Model of Church Governance?**

As mentioned above, early churches were independent. But in the second century AD, churches began to move away from using the term *episkopos*/overseer as a common function of eldership but began to use it for the one elder who stood out among their elder group. The one who was charismatic, more forceful, etc became viewed as the leading Elder. So they reserved the term *episkopos/overseer* (now often translated bishop) for this leading elder. This led over time to the *episkopos*/bishop of the church in the capital city of Rome as the most powerful church leader to the point that the later Catholic Church model was of the Bishop of Rome/Pope as a monarch (ie. a bishop of bishops) who ruled over many churches (ie. a hierarchy of bishops). The later Church of England; (which is the Episcopal church in the US) is an offshoot of the Catholic Church (from when Henry VIII wanted to get divorced) and has similar church governance but by a Synod/council of regional bishops, of whom the Archbishop of Canterbury has preeminence. The Anglican church did not go through a reformation in the same way as the protestant churches. The Reformation brought about through the work of church reformers like John Huss, Martin Luther (Lutheran Church), Huldrych Zwingli, John Calvin (Presbyterian/Reformed Churches) led to reformed or protestant State Churches: Lutheran in Germany; Swiss Reformed in Switzerland and in Scotland, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

The Presbyterian Church governance model is one of a plurality of Elders who rule without congregational participation. The Elders are hierarchically subordinated to a regional council of Elders, with the

regional council also subordinated to a national council of Elders. The Presbyterian model is connected to the reformed theology of Calvin. This model often problematically divides elders into Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders.

Congregational church governance arose among the Puritans, Quakers, Congregational churches, Anabaptist, and also in General and Particular Baptist churches after the reformation. The 1689 Baptist Confession calls for churches to be led by Elders and deacons.<sup>120</sup> Congregational church governance rests upon a democratic church rule where the congregation elects pastors, elders, deacons, and church officials (trustees, staff, administrators). Purely democratic rule is rarely found in these churches. This model of church governance essentially combined congregational rule with one of two types of leadership: (1) a single-elder/pastor leadership, and (2) a plural-elder leadership. The single-elder leadership model is the one found today in many Southern Baptist churches. However, this has not always been the case among Southern Baptists.

William Bullein Johnson (1782-1862) was the first president of the newly formed Southern Baptist Convention, serving from 1845-1851. Johnson pastored churches in Georgia and South Carolina from 1804-1852 and his son became an S.B.C. missionary to China in 1846. Johnson held strongly to the view that a plurality of elders was needed to lead a local church.

The importance and necessity of a bishopric [*meaning elders/overseers*] for each church, embodying gifts for various services, is thus most obvious for the accomplishment of one of the great ends for which Christ came into the world, and for which, when he ascended up on high, he received gifts for men” (see Eph. 4:7-16)...A plurality in the bishopric, is of great importance for mutual counsel and aid, that the government and edification of the flock may be promoted in the best manner...These rulers were all equal in rank and authority, no one having a preeminence over the rest. This satisfactorily appears from the fact, that the same qualifications were required in all, so that though some labored in word and doctrine, and others did not, the distinction between them was not in rank, but in the character of their service.<sup>121</sup>

Plural-elder congregational church governance was present and common among Southern Baptist churches in 19th century (1800s) and was even promoted by some in S.B.C. leadership. However, local baptist congregations have always been independent and no one governance model was imposed on them. Early in our Southern Baptist History, some congregations had a two-class system of elders: ruling and teaching, but most thought this two-class form to be incorrect.

From the mid-19th to early 20th century, plural-elder leadership gradually declined among Southern Baptist churches for several reasons. First, most churches outside of big cities were small. Some so small they did not even have a pastor available every week. These pastors were circuit-riding preachers who led two-four churches and traveled every week between them. So a tradition rose up with deacons taking care of day to day needs (and ruling while the pastor was out) and a single pastor leading & teaching/preaching. In this case the role of teaching was tightly attached to elder/pastor. Second, the predominant view at seminaries at the time did not support a necessity for a plurality of elders (this is not always the case today). Third, church polity has always had a tendency to be shaped by the broader culture; and the 20th Century saw a rise in business and government toward consolidated power and corporate hierarchy with the leader as CEO. A fourth reason for the decline of plural-elder congregational governance would be that it was a way to distinguish from S.B.C. churches from Presbyterians. The Baptist Faith and Message confession of the S.B.C. utilized the term elder until 1963, but never prescribed usage.<sup>122</sup> At this time single-elder congregational rule still predominates across the S.B.C. but some churches are returning to a plural-elder model. Unfortunately, the plural-elder model is often viewed as something that only a Baptist church holding to reformed theology would use, but this is inaccurate.



## **How does the Congregational Church Governance we have today compare to the Biblical model?**

A single-elder/pastor led congregational rule can, of course, work because the ultimate authority and responsibility resides with the congregation.<sup>123</sup> However, it often leaves the burden of authority and leading the church upon one man, thus: (1) depriving the church of the close watch care, diverse gifts, unity/efficiency of, and longer-term care of multiple elders; (2) depriving the elder/pastor of the shared support among co-equals, thus wearing out the pastor (as seen in the short tenure for most pastors); and (3) depriving the pastor and church of accountability for the elder/pastor. Single-elder/pastor rule also deprives the pastor of the shared responsibility and support needed to perform the church discipline nature of the elder calling: reproof and correction – as seen today in the rare instance of church discipline<sup>124</sup> being performed by pastors/churches today. Single-elder/pastor leadership also leaves open an easy movement toward either a monarchical Bishop rule (like the Catholics/Anglicans - which we see in franchise churches where a mother church has daughter church “franchises” spread across the country) or a local bishop rule (where final authority resides with the pastor alone – which we see in many medium to large churches).

The local bishop style single-elder is where the pastor acts as a CEO in a business model, where the congregation has abdicated its role and his rule is either absolute or where committees defer to his/staff’s leadership. The latter naturally occurs over time as the pastor’s leadership becomes trusted and the congregation defaults on their oversight. In this model staff are organized in a hierarchical business corporate structure and utilize committees to help run the church – which is ultimately an opaque process often lacking in both transparency to the congregation and coordination of ministry.<sup>125</sup> This can leave the congregation in the dark as to how and why decisions are made, thus leading to a lack of trust in leadership.

So how does the single-elder congregational model compare to the biblical plural elder congregational model?

<b><u>Biblical</u></b> <b><u>Congregational-rule Plural-Elder Model</u></b>	<b><u>Modern</u></b> <b><u>Single-Elder Congregational Model</u></b>
<i><b>Elder Council</b></i> <i>Elders (includes Teaching Elder/Senior Pastor as first among equals)</i>	<i>Elder Roles:</i> Deacon, Select staff, Trustee, Treasurer, Deacons, Committee Chairperson or Committee, Uniquely influential Members (wealthy/givers, etc.)
<i><b>Deacons</b></i> <i>(Service Ministry Leaders)</i> <i>Staff, Administration</i>	<i>Deacon Role:</i> Deacons, Staff Church Members
<i><b>Congregation</b></i> <i>Active Members</i> <i>(ministry participation and consent)</i> An accountable and involved Membership	<i>Congregational Role:</i> <i>Active Members:</i> Ministry leadership, Service Untethered, Often limited or abdicated involvement Often unaccountable <i>Inactive Members</i> (who return just to vote)

As one can see, the modern single-elder church governance model has members, staff, and committees (who may or may not meet the Biblical criteria for elders) functionally fulfilling the role of Elder. In the same instance there are members, staff, and committees who are functionally fulfilling the role of Deacon who may or may not be qualified to do so. In either case, the congregation has abdicated its role of consent in the biblical selection of Elders and Deacons by not examining those holding the functional authority of elders and deacons according to the Biblical standards for those positions. This situation can lead to poor shepherding of the congregation.

The following is a comparison of the current governance at Travis Ave. compared to the Biblical Plural-Elder led congregational model.

### **Biblical Congregational-rule Plural-Elder Model**

***Elder Council***  
*Elders* (includes Teaching Elder/Senior Pastor  
as first among equals)

***Deacons***  
*(Service Ministry Leaders)*  
*Staff, Administration*

***Congregation***  
*Active Members*  
*(ministry, participation and consent)*  
An accountable and involved  
Membership

### **Travis Ave. Church Governance**

*Elder/Bishop: The Pastor*

*Select staff, Certain Committees,*  
*At times: Deacon Leaders*  
*or Deacon board*  
*also Uniquely influential*  
*Members (wealthy/ givers, etc.)*

*Deacon Role: Staff, Church*  
*Members, Some Deacons*

*Congregational Role:*  
*Deacons: must give consent*  
*Active Members: Ministry*  
*leadership, Service*  
*Untethered or unaccountable*  
*Often limited or*  
*abdicated involvement*  
*Inactive Members*  
*(who return just to vote)*

## **CGST Team Recommendation**

After careful study of Scripture, books, personal interviews, sermons, review of our current governance model, and after many meetings of discussion and prayer, the CGST Team has concluded that there is a need for a change in our current model of church governance. ***The Team recommends that Travis Ave. Baptist Church move to a congregational-rule plural-elder led model – with the Church being led by a plurality of Elders, to include the senior pastor and other qualified men raised from the membership and ministry staff of the church (with the Elders having equality/no distinction in status or authority among them).***

If you have any questions or comments, please email the CGST Team at: **cgst@travis.org**

**From Pastor Michael Dean...**

## **THE PRACTICAL ADVANTAGES FOR A PLURALITY OF ELDERS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH**

**Accountability** – Godly elders are a great means for holding one another accountable to live, teach, and lead faithfully. In addition, sharing authority among a number of men can keep one man from wrongly dominating the congregation.

**Wisdom and counsel** – The Bible teaches there is more wisdom to be found in a multitude of counselors (Prov. 11:14; 24:6). A collegial approach to church leadership insures a better perspective from which to make decisions.

**Balance** – No one man has all the gifts that are necessary to lead and edify the church. A plurality of elders serves the church by bringing men with different and complementary gifts to church leadership.

**Shared load** – Caring for the needs of the whole church is a burden God does not intend one man to bear alone. Even the most faithful, gifted pastor needs help from other godly men in order to pay careful attention to himself and to all the flock.

*Acts 20:28 - 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.*

**Example for the church** – Having a plurality of elders demonstrates that the work of ministry is not reserved for a select few. Rather, it provides an example of maturity for every man, particularly when some of the elders are men who work ordinary jobs and are not paid by the church.

**Shared authority** – Responsibility for decisions belongs collectively to the entire group of elders. No one elder takes the blame or the credit for decisions that are made.

**CONCLUSION** – This matter of church leadership is of vital importance. As Paul wrote to Timothy about the qualifications for elders and deacons he concluded the matter by saying:

*1 Timothy 3:15 - if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.*

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:1–2 In the beginning **God created the heavens and the earth.** <sup>2</sup>The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and **the Spirit of God was moving** over the surface of the waters. John 1:1–3 <sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and **the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** <sup>2</sup>**He was in the beginning with God.** <sup>3</sup>**All things came into being through Him,** and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. See also Colossians 1:13–22 “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of **His beloved Son,** <sup>14</sup>in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. <sup>15</sup>He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup>**For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.** <sup>17</sup>He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>**He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.** <sup>19</sup>For it was the Father’s good pleasure for **all the fullness to dwell in Him,** <sup>20</sup>and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. <sup>21</sup>And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, <sup>22</sup>yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach...

<sup>2</sup> Judges 8:23 But Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; **the LORD shall rule over you.**” 1 Samuel 12:12 “When you saw that Nahash the king of the sons of Ammon came against you, you said to me, ‘No, but a king shall reign over us,’ although **the LORD your God was your king.** See also Deut 17:15 & 1 Sam 10:19ff - where God reserves the right to select Israel’s human kings..

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 1:26–28 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and **let them rule** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” <sup>27</sup>God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. <sup>28</sup>God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; **and rule over** the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” See also Psalm 8:6.

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 3:6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, **she took from its fruit and ate;** and she gave also to her husband with her, **and he ate. At this time mankind spiritually died and became subject to the dominion of Satan. Jesus calls Satan “the ruler of this world”** who will be cast out (John 12:31) and judged (John 16:11). See also Satan Tempting Jesus in the wilderness (Matt 4:6-8). Paul talks of Satan’s dominion in Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. However, through Christ, **God made a way for men to turn toward the dominion of God** (Acts 26:15-18). Paul states, <sup>6</sup>Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things **the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.** <sup>7</sup>Therefore do not be partakers with them; <sup>8</sup>**for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light** (Ephesians 5:6–8).

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 9:2 “The **fear of you and the terror of you** will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given.

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 9:5–6 “Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man’s brother I will require the life of man. <sup>6</sup>“Whoever sheds man’s blood, **By man his blood shall be shed,** For in the image of God He made man.

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 11:8 So **the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth;** and they stopped building the city.

<sup>8</sup> Deuteronomy 32:8–9 “When the **Most High gave the nations their inheritance,** When He separated the sons of man, He set the boundaries of the peoples According to the number of the sons of Israel. <sup>9</sup>“**For the LORD’s portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance.**

<sup>9</sup> Genesis 12:3 <sup>3</sup>And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And **in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.**” Genesis 22:18 **“In your seed** all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” Galatians 3:16 Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as referring to many, but rather to one, “And to your seed,” that is, Christ.

<sup>10</sup> Deuteronomy 4:19 “And beware not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, **those which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples** under the whole heaven.

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 49:10 “The **scepter shall not depart from Judah**, Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And **to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.**”

<sup>12</sup> 2 Samuel 7:8–13 “Now therefore, thus **you shall say to My servant David**, ‘**Thus says the LORD of hosts**, “I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel. <sup>9</sup>“I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth. <sup>10</sup>“I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, <sup>11</sup>even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you. <sup>12</sup>“When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, **I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom.** <sup>13</sup>“**He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.**”

<sup>13</sup> Exodus 4:13ff.

<sup>14</sup> Exodus 17; Numbers 11:28, 27:18ff.

<sup>15</sup> Exodus 3:18 “They will pay heed to what you say; **and you with the elders of Israel will come to the king of Egypt** and you will say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. So now, please, let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.’”

<sup>16</sup> Exodus 18:14–23 <sup>14</sup>Now when Moses’ father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, “What is this thing that you are doing for the people? **Why do you alone sit as judge** and all the people stand about you from morning until evening?” <sup>15</sup>Moses said to his father-in-law, “Because the people come to me to inquire of God. <sup>16</sup>“When they have a dispute, it comes to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbor and make known the statutes of God and His laws.” <sup>17</sup>Moses’ father-in-law said to him, “**The thing that you are doing is not good.** <sup>18</sup>“**You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone.** <sup>19</sup>“Now listen to me: I will give you counsel, and God be with you. **You be the people’s representative before God, and you bring the disputes to God,** <sup>20</sup>**then teach them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they are to walk and the work they are to do.** <sup>21</sup>“Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. <sup>22</sup>“**Let them judge the people** at all times; and let it be that every major dispute they will bring to you, but every minor dispute they themselves will judge. **So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you.** <sup>23</sup>“**If you do this thing and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people also will go to their place in peace.**”

<sup>17</sup> Leviticus 8:1–9:24...[9:1 Now it came about on the eighth day that Moses called Aaron and his sons **and the elders of Israel**...Leviticus 9:5 So they took what Moses had commanded to the front of the tent of meeting, **and the whole congregation came near** and stood before the LORD.

<sup>18</sup> Numbers 11:4–6 The rabble who were among them had **greedy desires**; and also the sons of **Israel wept** again and said, “**Who will give us meat to eat?**” <sup>5</sup>“We remember the **fish** which we used to eat free in Egypt, the **cucumbers** and the **melons** and the **leeks** and the **onions** and the garlic, <sup>6</sup>but now our appetite is gone. There is **nothing at all to look at except this manna.**”

<sup>19</sup> Numbers 11:11–13 **So Moses said to the LORD, “Why have You been so hard on Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all this people on me?**  
<sup>12</sup>“Was it I who conceived all this people? Was it I who brought them forth, that You should say to me, ‘Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries a nursing infant, to the land which You swore to their fathers?’<sup>13</sup>“Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? **For they weep before me,** saying, ‘Give us meat that we may eat!’

<sup>20</sup> Numbers 11:26–30 <sup>26</sup>But two men had remained in the camp; the name of one was **Eldad and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them** (now they were among those who had been registered, but had not gone out to the tent), and they prophesied in the camp. <sup>27</sup>So a young man ran and told Moses and said, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” <sup>28</sup>Then Joshua the son of Nun, the attendant of Moses from his youth, said, “Moses, my lord, restrain them.” <sup>29</sup>But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? **Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!**” <sup>30</sup>Then **Moses returned to the camp, both he and the elders of Israel.**

<sup>21</sup> Exodus 24:1 Then He said to Moses, **“Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel, and you shall worship at a distance.**

<sup>22</sup> As an aside... Scripture says no man can see God and live (Exod 33:20; John 1:18); Moses was only allowed to see God’s glory as He passed by (Exod 33:21–23), this person of the God-head was likely the pre-incarnate Christ (compare John 6:46; Rev 1:12–16; 21:11, 18). In John 12:41, John says that when Isaiah saw the LORD on His throne (in Isaiah 6:1ff), he was seeing Christ...thus equating the LORD in Isaiah 6 with the pre-incarnate Christ. See also Luke 24:27ff.

<sup>23</sup> See also 2 Chron 5:2–4.

<sup>24</sup> Judges 11.

<sup>25</sup> Judges 21:16ff.

<sup>26</sup> 1 Samuel 8

<sup>27</sup> 2 Samuel 3:17; 5:3. 1 Chron 11:3.

<sup>28</sup> 1 Kings 12.

<sup>29</sup> 2 Kings 23:1–3. 2 Chron 34:29–33.

<sup>30</sup> Jeremiah 29:1–33

<sup>31</sup> Ezra 5:1–3.

<sup>32</sup> God as shepherd: Psalm 23:1; 28:9; 78:70–72; 80:1; Matt 2:6; Isa 40:11; Micah 7:14. Kings as shepherd: 2 Samuel 5:2; 1 Kings 22:17; Jer 10:21; Jeremiah 23:1–5 **“Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!”** declares the LORD. <sup>2</sup>Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: “You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,” declares the LORD. <sup>3</sup>“Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply. <sup>4</sup>“**I will also raise up shepherds over them** and they will tend them; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares the LORD. <sup>5</sup>“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, **“When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land.** See Ezekiel 34.

<sup>33</sup> 1 Samuel 17:34–35 But David said to Saul, **“Your servant was tending his father’s sheep.** When a lion or a bear came and **took a lamb** from the flock, <sup>35</sup>**I went out after him and attacked him, and rescued it** from his mouth; and when he rose up against me, I seized him by his beard and struck him and killed him.

<sup>34</sup> Psalm 23:1–4 **The LORD is my shepherd,** I shall not want. <sup>2</sup>**He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.** <sup>3</sup>**He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness** For His name’s sake. <sup>4</sup>Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, **I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.**

<sup>35</sup> John 10:1–5 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup>“**But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the**

sheep. <sup>36</sup>“To him the doorkeeper opens, and **the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.** <sup>46</sup>“When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and **the sheep follow him because they know his voice.** <sup>56</sup>“A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

<sup>36</sup> John 10:7–15 So Jesus said to them again, “Truly, truly, I say to you, **I am the door of the sheep.** <sup>86</sup>“All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. <sup>96</sup>**I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.** <sup>106</sup>“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; **I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.** <sup>116</sup>**I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.** <sup>126</sup>“He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. <sup>136</sup>“He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. <sup>146</sup>**I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me,** <sup>156</sup>even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. See also Jer 23:5.

<sup>37</sup> 1 Peter 5:4. See also John 10:16 “...and they will become one flock *with* one shepherd..

<sup>38</sup> Hebrews 13:20.

<sup>39</sup> 1 Peter 2:25.

<sup>40</sup> John 21:15–17 So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “**Simon, son of John, do you love Me** more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “**Tend My lambs.**” <sup>16</sup>He said to him again a second time, “**Simon, son of John, do you love Me?**” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “**Shepherd My sheep.**” <sup>17</sup>He said to him the third time, “**Simon, son of John, do you love Me?**” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “**Tend My sheep.**”

<sup>41</sup> Matthew 16:15–19 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” <sup>166</sup>**Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”** <sup>17</sup>And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. <sup>186</sup>“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. <sup>196</sup>“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.”

<sup>42</sup> Colossians 1:15–20 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>166</sup>**For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth,** visible and invisible, whether **thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.** <sup>17</sup>He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. <sup>186</sup>**He is also head of the body, the church;** and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. <sup>19</sup>For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, <sup>20</sup>and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

<sup>43</sup> All the attributes of God can be added here as well.

<sup>44</sup> Deuteronomy 18:18–19 The LORD told MOSES...“**I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.**” <sup>196</sup>It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.

<sup>45</sup> Hebrews 5:7–10 Speaking of Jesus, the author of the Book of Hebrews writes...“In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. <sup>8</sup>Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. <sup>9</sup>And having been made perfect, **He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,** <sup>10</sup>**being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.** See also Heb 4:14-16

<sup>46</sup> Isaiah 9:6–7 For **a child will be born** to us, a son will be given to us; And **the government will rest on His shoulders**; And His name will be called **Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace**. <sup>7</sup>**There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore.** The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

<sup>47</sup> Luke 1:31–33 “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and **you shall name Him Jesus**. <sup>32</sup>“**He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High**; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; <sup>33</sup>and **He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.**” See also the genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1:1 ff.

<sup>48</sup> Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.**”

<sup>49</sup> Hebrews 2:9–18 But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, **Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.** <sup>10</sup>**For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.** <sup>11</sup>For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, <sup>12</sup>saying, “**I WILL PROCLAIM YOUR NAME TO MY BRETHREN, IN THE MIDST OF THE CONGREGATION I WILL SING YOUR PRAISE.**” <sup>13</sup>And again, “**I WILL PUT MY TRUST IN HIM.**” And again, “**BEHOLD, I AND THE CHILDREN WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN ME.**” <sup>14</sup>Therefore, **since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,** <sup>15</sup>**and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.** <sup>16</sup>For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. <sup>17</sup>Therefore, **He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.** <sup>18</sup>For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

<sup>50</sup> Hebrews 9:11–12 But **when Christ appeared as a high priest** of the good things to come, **He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle**, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; <sup>12</sup>**and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood**, He entered the holy place **once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.**

<sup>51</sup> Matthew 28:5–7 **The angel said** to the women, “Do not be afraid; for **I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified.** <sup>6</sup>“**He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said.** Come, see the place where He was lying. <sup>7</sup>“**Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead**; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.” Acts 2:29–36 “Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch **David** that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. <sup>30</sup>“And so, because he **was a prophet** and knew that **GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT ONE OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE,** <sup>31</sup>**he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ**, that He WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. <sup>32</sup>“**This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.** <sup>33</sup>“Therefore **having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit**, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. <sup>34</sup>“For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: ‘**THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,** <sup>35</sup>**UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.**” ’

<sup>36</sup>“Therefore **let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.**” Ephesians 4:8–10 (NASB95) <sup>8</sup>Therefore it says, “**WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN.**” <sup>9</sup>(Now this expression, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? <sup>10</sup>He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) Acts 1:9–11 And after He had said these things, <sup>10</sup>And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going,



behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. <sup>11</sup>They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? **This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.**” See also John 2:18-22 and Acts 3:13-21; 26:22-23; Rom 1:1-4.

<sup>52</sup> Ephesians 4:8–10 Therefore it says, “**WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN.**” <sup>9</sup>(Now this expression, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? <sup>10</sup>**He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.**)

<sup>53</sup> Revelation 3:21 ‘He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, **as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.**

<sup>54</sup> Matthew 25:31ff. Daniel 7:13–14 “I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a **Son of Man was coming**, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. <sup>14</sup>“**And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.**

<sup>55</sup> Revelation 19:11–16 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a **white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True**, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. <sup>12</sup>His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. <sup>13</sup>He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and **His name is called The Word of God.** <sup>14</sup>And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. <sup>15</sup>From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. <sup>16</sup>**And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”**

<sup>56</sup> Matthew 28:18–20 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup>“**Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”**

<sup>57</sup> Ephesians 4:1–6 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, <sup>2</sup>with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, <sup>3</sup>being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>**There is one body and one Spirit**, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup>**one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>one God and Father** of all who is over all and through all and in all. 2 Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, **To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours**, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

<sup>58</sup> Galatians 3:26–29 **For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.** <sup>27</sup>For all of you who were baptized into Christ have **clothed yourselves with Christ.** <sup>28</sup>**There is neither Jew nor Greek**, there is **neither slave nor free man**, there is **neither male nor female**; for **you are all one in Christ Jesus.** <sup>29</sup>And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.

<sup>59</sup> Romans 12:6–8 Since we have **gifts that differ** according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; <sup>7</sup>if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; <sup>8</sup>or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. See also 1 Corinthians 12.

<sup>60</sup> Romans 12:4–5 For just as we have many members in one body and **all the members do not have the same function**, <sup>5</sup>so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

<sup>61</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:4–31 Now there are **varieties of gifts**, but the **same Spirit.** <sup>5</sup>And there are **varieties of ministries**, and the **same Lord.** <sup>6</sup>There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. <sup>7</sup>But **to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.** <sup>8</sup>For to one is given the **word of wisdom** through the Spirit, and to another the **word of knowledge** according to the same Spirit; <sup>9</sup>to

another **faith** by the same Spirit, and to another **gifts of healing** by the one Spirit,<sup>10</sup> and to another the effecting of **miracles**, and to another **prophecy**, and to another the **distinguishing of spirits**, to another various kinds of **languages**, and to another the interpretation of **languages**.<sup>11</sup> But one and **the same Spirit** works all these things, **distributing to each one individually just as He wills**.<sup>12</sup> For even as the **body is one and yet has many members**, and **all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body**, so also is Christ.<sup>13</sup> For by one Spirit **we were all baptized into one body**, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.<sup>14</sup> For the body is not one member, but many.<sup>15</sup> If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body.<sup>16</sup> And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body.<sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?<sup>18</sup> But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.<sup>19</sup> If they were all one member, where would the body be?<sup>20</sup> But now there are many members, but one body.<sup>21</sup> And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."<sup>22</sup> On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary;<sup>23</sup> and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable,<sup>24</sup> whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked,<sup>25</sup> so that there may be no division in the body, but that the **members may have the same care for one another**.<sup>26</sup> **And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it**.<sup>27</sup> Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.<sup>28</sup> **And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of languages**.<sup>29</sup> All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they?<sup>30</sup> All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with languages, do they? All do not interpret, do they?<sup>31</sup> But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.

<sup>62</sup> John 17:22-23; Ephesians 4:1-3, 13; Col 3:14.

<sup>63</sup> John 13:34-35; 15:12, 17. Heb 10:24; 1 John 4:7.

<sup>64</sup> Gal 5:13; 1 Peter 4:10.

<sup>65</sup> Ephesians 4:11-13 And He gave some as **apostles**, and some as **prophets**, and some as **evangelists**, and some as **pastors and teachers**,<sup>12</sup> for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;<sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

<sup>66</sup> Acts 21:8; 2 Tim 4:5.

<sup>67</sup> Acts 13:1-2 Now there were at **Antioch, in the church** that was there, **prophets and teachers**: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.<sup>2</sup> While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the **Holy Spirit said**, "**Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them**." James 3:1 James writes... "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

<sup>68</sup> Elders as under-shepherd – see 1 Peter 5:2, 4.

<sup>69</sup> Titus 1:5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would **set in order** what remains and **appoint elders in every city** as I directed you,

<sup>70</sup> Mark 10:35-45 **James and John**, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You."<sup>36</sup> And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?"<sup>37</sup> They said to Him, "**Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory**."<sup>38</sup> But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"<sup>39</sup> They said to Him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized."<sup>40</sup> "But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been

prepared.”<sup>41</sup> **Hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John.** <sup>42</sup>Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup>“But it is not this way among you, but **whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant;** <sup>44</sup>and **whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all.** <sup>45</sup>“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

<sup>71</sup> See Matt 14:28ff; 15:15; 16:16ff; 174; 18:21; 19:27, et al.

<sup>72</sup> See Acts chapters 1-5, 8-12, 15.

<sup>73</sup> Galatians 1:18–19 Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. <sup>19</sup>But I did not see **any other of the apostles except James, the Lord’s brother.**

<sup>74</sup> Acts 15:4 When they arrived at Jerusalem, **they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders**, and they reported all that God had done with them. Acts 21:18 And the following day Paul went in with us to **James, and all the elders** were present.

<sup>75</sup> Perhaps teaching elder. James later sends men out on mission...Galatians 2:9–12 and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, **James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.** <sup>10</sup>They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do. <sup>11</sup>But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. <sup>12</sup>For **prior to the coming of certain men from James**, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.

<sup>76</sup> Acts 15:1-35, specifically vv. 13-22.

<sup>77</sup> Acts 16:4 Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the **decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem**, for them to observe. In this instance the The “decrees” were likely the Jerusalem church elders determination of how to handle the circumcision question which Judaizers from the church in Jerusalem were using to cause problems. See Acts 15:23-29.

<sup>78</sup> In Gal 2:11ff, Paul publicly confronts Peter and Barnabas for separating from the Gentiles and only eating with the Jews at church meals.

<sup>79</sup> Jesus and the Apostles taught openly, performed miracles openly, performed church discipline openly, worshipped openly, spoke openly in the midst of the congregation. See the Gospels and the book of Acts.

<sup>80</sup> See Acts 21:20, 23, 25; Acts 15:19-20.

<sup>81</sup> See Acts 15:22-29.

<sup>82</sup> Paul and Barnabas disagreed over the participation of John Mark in their second mission trip after he bailed on their first mission trip. So they went their separate ways on mission (Acts 15:36-41). See also...Acts 11:1-18.

<sup>83</sup> Acts 11:26 and when he had found him, he brought him to **Antioch**. And for an entire year they met **with the church and taught considerable numbers**; and the **disciples were first called Christians** in Antioch. See also Acts 16:13-15.

<sup>84</sup> See again..Jesus’ “tend My sheep” command to Peter, John 21:15-17.

<sup>85</sup> Acts 14:19–23 But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned **Paul** and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. <sup>20</sup>But while the **disciples** stood around him, he got up and entered the city. The next day he went away with **Barnabas** to Derbe. <sup>21</sup>After **they had preached the gospel** to that city and had **made many disciples**, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, <sup>22</sup>**strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them** to continue in the faith, and saying, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” <sup>23</sup>When **they had appointed elders** for them **in every church**, having prayed with fasting, **they commended them to the Lord** in whom they had believed. See also 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13.

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<sup>86</sup> Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4.

<sup>87</sup> Acts 13:1–3 Now there were at **Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon** who was called Niger, and **Lucius** of Cyrene, and **Manaen** who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and **Saul**. <sup>2</sup>While **they** were **ministering to the Lord** and **fasting**, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” <sup>3</sup>Then, when **they** had **fasted and prayed** and **laid their hands** on them, **they sent them** away.

<sup>88</sup> Acts 13-14.

<sup>89</sup> Acts 20:17; Timothy 1:1, 5:17

<sup>90</sup> Titus 1:5.

<sup>91</sup> See Philippians 1:1, but the term there is plural of *episkopos* (literally “overseers” meaning guardian/supervisor/one who watches over). Paul calls the “elders” of Ephesus “overseers”/*episkopos* in Acts 20:28. Mentioned five times (Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 2:25 – where Christ is spoken of as the “Shepherd and **Guardian**/overseer of your soul...”), this is the term sometimes translated as “bishop,” but the Catholic idea of a church bishop who rules over a congregation or regional congregations did not develop until the second century AD.

<sup>92</sup> James 5:14–15 **Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him** with oil in the name of the Lord; <sup>15</sup>and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

<sup>93</sup> 1 Peter 1:1.

<sup>94</sup> 1 Peter 5:1–4 Therefore, **I exhort the elders among you**, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, <sup>2</sup>**shepherd** the flock of God among you, **exercising oversight** not under compulsion, but **voluntarily**, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but **with eagerness**; <sup>3</sup>nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to **be examples to the flock**. <sup>4</sup>And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

<sup>95</sup> Acts 20:17–32 <sup>17</sup>From Miletus **he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church**. <sup>18</sup>And when they had come to him, he said to them, “You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, <sup>19</sup>serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; <sup>20</sup>how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, <sup>21</sup>solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>22</sup>“And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, <sup>23</sup>except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. <sup>24</sup>“But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. <sup>25</sup>“And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face. <sup>26</sup>“Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. <sup>27</sup>“For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. <sup>28</sup>“**Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God** which He purchased with His own blood. <sup>29</sup>“I know that **after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;** <sup>30</sup>**and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.** <sup>31</sup>“Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. <sup>32</sup>“And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

<sup>96</sup> This is the term used by the Presbyterian churches in their name...in the Presbyterian form of church governance churches are not congregationally ruled or autonomous. Presbyterianism is a hierarchy where church elder boards are self elected and each church elder board is under the authority and rule of a regional Presbyterian denominational council which is in turn under the authority of a national council. New Testament

churches were often planted by Apostles like Paul who raised up elders among them, and who kept in contact with them over time (admonishing, instructing, and shepherding them from a distance through letters and visits), but even still the **New Testament Churches were autonomous under Christ**. Churches supported each other (such as Antioch sending alms to Jerusalem, Acts 11:30) but not under compulsion. Finally Churches could send for counsel from each other...as when the church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas for help from the Church in Jerusalem over the Judaizer/Christians over the question of circumcision (from the church in Jerusalem) who were causing problems in Antioch...however, this was more a one-time **instance of cooperation and clarification** (going to the source of the problem to settle an issue of religious practice) than one of a hierarchical subjugation of one church to another.

<sup>97</sup> 1 Peter 1:1; 2 John 1:1; 3 John 1:1.

<sup>98</sup> Luke 22:6; Acts 22:5.

<sup>99</sup> Samuel E. Waldron, "Plural Elder Congregationalism," in *Who Runs the Church?: 4 Views on Church Government*. Edited by Steven B. Cowan. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004. Pp. 196-198.

<sup>100</sup> Acts 20:17-38, Titus 1:5-11, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 1 Peter 5:1-4, 1 Thess 5:12-13.

<sup>101</sup> It is an honorable thing for a Christian man of the congregation to aspire to the office of Elder (1 Timothy 3:1).

<sup>102</sup> See 1 Tim 5:17; James 3:1; Acts 13:1; Rom 12:7 (the office of Elder and Giftedness to teach are two different things – this does not mean that there are differing Elder roles); 1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11. This is not just Sunday school from prepared materials, but teaching and preaching to the congregation from their own study of the Scriptures. Paul indicates that he studies the scriptures for himself from the original languages when he says to Timothy, "When you come **bring** the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, **and the books, especially the parchments.**" 2 Timothy 4:13.

<sup>103</sup> Acts 6:1ff.

<sup>104</sup> Matthew 20:25–28 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. <sup>26</sup>"It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your **servant**, <sup>27</sup>and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; <sup>28</sup>just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

<sup>105</sup> Phil 1:1 and 1 Tim 3:8-13.

<sup>106</sup> Ephesians 5:18...we are commanded to "**Be filled with the Spirit**"; once we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit...we must simply ask to be filled, Luke 11:13 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?**"

<sup>107</sup> Hebrews 3:4–6 For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. <sup>5</sup>Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; <sup>6</sup>but **Christ was faithful as a Son over His house—whose house we are**, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end. See also...Matthew 18:20 "**For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.**"

<sup>108</sup> The issue of church Discipline reveals that the church needs no intermediary body to do the work to which it is called. Christ exercises His power and will in the Church through the Church's obedience to His commands in Scripture...See Matt 18:18-20; 1 Cor 5:3-13. See also Rev 2-3 where Christ holds churches accountable for their own members. The power to hold its members accountable correlates to the power to receive members, elect elders & deacons, etc. See Acts 6:1-7.

<sup>109</sup> Acts 14:23 mentions that once Disciples had been converted, the church existed, and Paul and Barnabas went back and appointed Elders upon their return journey to Antioch.

<sup>110</sup> Described as leaders in Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24.

<sup>111</sup> Acts 20:28 – Holy Spirit made; Eph 4:11 – Elders as gifts of Christ to the body of Christ.

<sup>112</sup> More than one financially supported elder is being thought of here...1 Timothy 5:17–18 The **elders** (*plural*) who rule well are to be considered **worthy of double honor** (*generous support*), **especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.** <sup>18</sup>For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS

THRESHING,” and “**The laborer is worthy of his wages.**” See also... 1 Corinthians 9:1–14 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? <sup>2</sup>If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. <sup>3</sup>My defense to those who examine me is this: <sup>4</sup>**Do we not have a right to eat and drink?** <sup>5</sup>Do we not have a right **to take along a believing wife**, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? <sup>6</sup>**Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working?** <sup>7</sup>**Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense?** Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock? <sup>8</sup>I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? <sup>9</sup>**For it is written in the Law of Moses, “YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING.”** God is not concerned about oxen, is He? <sup>10</sup>Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops. <sup>11</sup>If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? <sup>12</sup>If others share the right over you, do we not more? **Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things** so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. <sup>13</sup>Do you not know that **those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple**, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? <sup>14</sup>**So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.**

<sup>113</sup> Newton, Phil A. and Matt Schmucker. *Elders in the Life of the Church: Rediscovering the Biblical Model for Church Leadership*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014. P. 221.

<sup>114</sup> Acts 15:22 Then **it seemed good** to the apostles and the elders, **with the whole church**, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas—Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren. This follows the biblical model. Moses and the Elders make the covenant on Sinai, but the congregation affirms it. The congregation participates in anointing Aaron and sons as the Priestly leaders. The general order is: God calls, the elders negotiate, and the congregation ultimately affirms rulers (Jephthah, Gideon, Saul, David, Rehoboam)—though sometimes these get out of order.

<sup>115</sup> 1 Peter 2:5 **you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood**, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ... <sup>9</sup>**But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION**, so **that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you** out of darkness into His marvelous light. See also... Revelation 1:5–6 “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— <sup>6</sup>**and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.** See also Rev 20:6.

<sup>116</sup> 1 Timothy 5:19–22 **Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.** <sup>20</sup>**Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.** <sup>21</sup>I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to **maintain these principles without bias**, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality. <sup>22</sup>**Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily** and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.

<sup>117</sup> The author of Hebrews writes, “**Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account.** Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.” Hebrews 13:17. See also... 1 Peter 5:5 You **younger men**, likewise, **be subject to your elders**; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for **GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.** See also Rev 5:10; 20:6 which speak to our reigning with Christ.

<sup>118</sup> 1 Peter 2:5 **you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood**, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ... <sup>9</sup>**But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION**, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Revelation 1:6 and **He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.** See also Rev 5:10; 20:6 which speak to our reigning with Christ.

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<sup>119</sup> Colossians 1:7. See also 1 Timothy 6:18–19 Instruct them to **do good, to be rich in good works**, to be generous and ready to share, <sup>19</sup>storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed. See also 2 Tim 3:15-17.

<sup>120</sup> The Second London Baptist Confession, 1689, Chapter 26, Paragraph 8,

<sup>121</sup> Johnson, W. B., “The Gospel Developed through the Government and Order of the Churches of Jesus Christ” (Richmond: H.K. Ellison, 1846); in Dever, Mark, ed. *Polity: Biblical Arguments on how to Conduct Church Life*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Church Reform, 2001. Pp. 191-193

<sup>122</sup> Many thanks to W. Madison Grace II, Assistant Professor of Baptist History and Theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, for the majority of the information in this and the preceding paragraph.

<sup>123</sup> While most any governance model can work if the people cooperate, that does not mean all models biblical or equal in result. Jesus likened his Church to a flock of sheep who need to be tenderly cared for, and did not liken it to an authoritarian military command structure or a hierarchical corporate business model.

<sup>124</sup> Church discipline is where the elders and congregation hold each other (all church members) accountable for their actions. The Lord Jesus Christ has entrusted the local church with the authority and responsibility to discipline members for flagrant sin or serious doctrinal error, with the goal of restoration of the offender. This discipline is entrusted to the elders and congregation and is to follow the biblical pattern as set forth in Scripture (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5; 2 Cor 2:6-8; Gal 6:1; 2 Thess 3:6; Titus 3:10-11; and 2 John 7-11). Any church member who practices or affirms a doctrine or conduct that, in the judgment of the elders and congregation is: (1) opposed to the teaching of the Word of God, (2) threatening to the testimony of the church, or (3) divisive to the body; is to be subject to church discipline. The purpose of Church discipline is to bring the individual to repentance and protect the church from the destructive nature of unrepentant sin among its members. Discipline may involve a loss of church office (Elder, Deacon, Staff) exclusion from participation in ministry, or exclusion from the fellowship of the Lord’s Supper; and if the member is unrepentant, may lead to dismissal from the fellowship of the church. There are scriptural examples of Jesus and Paul discussing and performing church discipline (see above).

<sup>125</sup> Newton, Phil A. and Matt Schmucker. *Elders in the Life of the Church: Rediscovering the Biblical Model for Church Leadership*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014. P. 36.