

## The Organization of the Church

- I. Jesus is the head of the “universal”, spiritual body - the Church (Eph 1:22-23; Col 1:18)
  - A. The Church is not a democracy; it is a monarchy with Jesus on throne (Acts 2:29-31; Luke 1:31-33)
  - B. There is no earthly oversight of the “universal” body; we are not free to alter Church teaching/practices
  - C. Jesus alone has all authority (Matt 28:18) and reigns over His spiritual kingdom (I Cor 15:23-28)
  
- II. “Local” congregations are authorized to have church officers (leaders) that are called “elders” (Acts 20:17, 28)
  - A. There are 6 English words derived from 3 different Greek words used to designate this office
    1. The terms “elder” (e.g., Titus 1:5) and “presbyter” (e.g., I Tim 4:14 in NASB, KJV) come from the Greek “presbuteros” which indicates one who is older and wiser from experience [Strong's #4245]
    2. “Bishop” (e.g., Phil 1:1 in KJV, ASV) and “overseer” (e.g., Acts 20:28) are from the Greek “episkopos” [Strong's #1985]
      - a. The Greek “Epi” means “over” and “skopos” means “inspector”
      - b. Hence the word indicates one who looks over, manages or superintends others
    3. “Pastor” (e.g., Eph 4:11) and “shepherd” (e.g., I Pet 5:4) are derived from the Greek “poimen” [Strong's #4165, 4166]
      - a. This denotes one with responsibility to tend, feed or protect those under his care.
      - b. Note that the Biblical definition of a “pastor” is not the same as the “preacher”
    4. All three of these words are employed together in Acts 20:17-28 and again in I Pet 5:1-4
  - B. As the names imply, the Lord gave these men spiritual oversight of the local congregation
    1. They were to manage and take care of the local congregation (I Tim 3:5)
    2. They were to preach and teach (I Tim 5:17)
    3. They were to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict (Titus 1:9)
    4. They were to guard the flock as a shepherd cares for the sheep (Acts 20:28; I Pet 5:2)
    5. They were to be on alert watching for false teaching from within and outside (Acts 20:29-31)
    6. They were to administer relief to those in need (Acts 11:29-30)
  - C. To serve as an elder, these men must meet certain Biblical qualifications (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-10)

- D. Each local congregation had a plurality of elders; there were more than just one (Acts 11:30; Acts 14:23; Phil 1:1)
  - E. Elders are to lead by example not by dictatorship “lording over the flock” (I Pet 5:3)
  - F. Christians are not to receive accusations against elders without 2-3 witnesses (I Tim 5:19)
  - G. Christians are to obey and submit to the elders who watch for their souls (Heb 13:17)
  - H. Elders will have to account for the souls of their flock (Heb 13:17)
- III. Local congregations also have men who serve as deacons (Phil 1:1)
- A. “Deacon” comes from the Greek “diakonos” - from a word denoting “to run as in doing an errand”; it means to minister to or to serve. [Strong's #1249]
  - B. Deacons also must meet Biblical qualifications (I Tim 3:8-13)
  - C. In the example of Acts 6:1-6, deacons were men given responsibility for specific tasks of service to the local congregation
- IV. The New Testament Church also has men that preach the Gospel of Christ
- A. These men are called: preachers (Rom 10:14); ministers (Rom 15:16; II Cor 4:1); evangelists (Acts 21:8; II Tim 4:5)
  - B. Evangelists are to do the work of an evangelist and fulfill their ministry (II Tim 4:5)
    - 1. Preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, Exhort with great patience and instruction (II Tim 4:2)
    - 2. Be sober in all things and endure hardship for Christ (II Tim 4:5)
    - 3. Guard the faith (I Tim 6:20-21)
    - 4. Point out errors (apostasy) to the brethren and follow sound doctrine (I Tim 4:1-6)
  - C. The Bible discusses qualifications for an evangelist (II Tim 2:15-26; I Tim 4:12; I Tim 5:22)
    - 1. Must be an example in speech, conduct, love, faith, purity (I Tim 4:12)
    - 2. Must keep free from sin (I Tim 5:22)
    - 3. Must know the word (II Tim 2:15, 3:15-16)
    - 4. Must flee youthful lusts, pursue righteousness, reject ignorant speculation, not be quarrelsome rather be patient, able to teach (II Tim 2:22-26)
  - D. Evangelists were to preach Christ Jesus and not “ourselves” (II Cor 4:5)
  - E. Note preachers are not to receive a title of honor (e.g., Reverend, Father, etc. see Matt 23:1-12)
- V. The first century Church by necessity had some other special temporary workers
- A. Prophets: some had a gift of prophecy for edification, exhortation and consolation (1 Cor 14:1-3; Eph 4:11)
  - B. Others were given gifts of the Spirit for guidance, government, protection and instruction of the congregations (I Cor 12:1-11, 28-31; Eph 4:8-14)

- C. These gifts were given in the very early days of the Church through the laying on of the Apostles' hands (Acts 8:17-18) to equip the saints for works of service and to build up the body (Eph 4:11-12)
- D. Spiritual gifts were temporary; they were to cease with the coming of the written Word which brought us to the unity of the faith in love and knowledge of the Son of God (I Cor 12:31; 13:8-12; Eph 4:11-14; II Pet 1:19; Rev 22:18-19)
- E. God bore witness to the message by means of the spiritual gifts (Heb 2:3-4)