

**I. Introduction.**

**II. Is there a 'right' church structure (ecclesiology)? v. 7-17,28**

- A. The New Testament reveals how the church is to be run.
- B. Acts 20 provides a snapshot of the early church's meetings. 20:7-12 2:42
1. They met on the first day of the week. 20:7a I Cor. 16:2 Rev. 1:10 John 20:1 Heb. 10:24-25
  2. The Lord's Supper was a part of their weekly worship. 20:7b 2:42 I Co. 10:16 11:23
  3. They were devoted to the ministry of the Word. 20:7b-12-12 Acts 2:42 I Ti. 4:13
  4. They also were devoted to prayer and fellowship. Acts 2:42 20:11
- C. The New Testament reveals the way the local church is to be governed. v. 17, 28
1. Jesus Christ is the Head of the church. Col. 1:18
  2. The church is not a democracy. Jesus has appointed leaders. Acts 20:28 He. 13:17 I Ti. 5:17 I Pet. 5:3 I Th. 5:12
  3. How do we know whom Jesus has appointed to lead us? I Ti. 3:1-7 Ti. 1:5-9
  4. Each local church is to be led by a plurality of elders. 14:23 20:18 Ti. 1:5 Phil. 1:1 Js. 5:14 I Pe. 5:1 Heb. 13:17
    - a. No one man is ever called "The Pastor" of a church.
    - b. Jesus is the Chief Shepherd (Senior Pastor). I Pe. 2:25 5:4 He. 13:20 Jn. 10:11
  5. The titles *Elder* (Presbyter) and *Overseer* (Bishop) refer to the same office. v. 17, 28 Titus 1:5,7
  6. *Pastoring* (shepherding) is the function of the Elders. v. 28 I Pet. 5:2 Eph. 4:11
  7. All Elders are equal in rank and power.
  8. Different Elders will have different gifts and functions. I Tim. 5:17 Ro. 12:3-8
  9. There are many advantages of plural leadership: mutual accountability, balance, shared burdens, focus on Christ. v. 28 Gal. 2:11ff I Ti. 5:19-20 Pr. 15:12,31-32
  10. Elders are appointed by God and recognized by men. v. 28 14:23 Ti. 1:5ff I Ti. 3:1ff
  11. With the passing of the Apostles, there is no office above that of Elder. Eph. 2:20 Mt. 18:15-20 Ro. 15:26 II Co. 8-9
  12. The Elders are assisted by those who hold the serving office of Deacon. Acts 6:1-4 I Tim. 3:8-13
  13. Every member of the church participates in ministry using their spiritual gifts. I Co. 12:7 Ro. 12:6-8 I Pet. 4:10-11 2:5 Eph. 4:11ff

**III. Elders are called to shepherd (pastor) the flock of God. v. 18-38**

- A. Lead the Lord's sheep by setting an example. v. 18-19,33ff Ps. 23:2-3 I Pe. 5:3
1. Set an example by your holy life. I Ti. 4:12,16a Phil. 3:17 Heb. 13:7 I Co. 11:1
  2. Be a humble servant. v. 19a John 13:1-17 I Pet. 5:3,5 I Tim. 3:6 Phil. 2:1-11 Mark 10:42-45
  3. Be prepared to suffer tribulation. v. 19c, 22-24 9:16 John 10:11 II Ti. 3:12 4:7-8 II Co. 11:23-29
  4. Work hard in your vocation. v. 33-35 I Th. 2:5,9-10 I Tim. 3:3b Ezek. 34:2-3
  5. Give direction to the flock. Ps. 23:2-3 Ro. 12:8 He. 13:17 I Ti. 5:17 I Ti. 5:12
  6. Serve with joy. I Pe. 3:2 Heb. 13:17 I Th. 2:19-20 Heb. 12:1-3

- B. Feed the Lord's flock. v. 20-21 6:4 Ps. 23:5 John 21:16 I Tim. 3:2 5:17 I Th. 5:12 Titus 1:9 Ps. 23:5a Eph. 4:11-12 John 21:16 I Pet. 5:2 Acts 6:4
  - 1. Before you can feed the Lord's people you must feed your own soul. I Ti. 4:14-16 II Tim. 2:15
  - 2. Preach the whole counsel of God. v. 20, 26-27 II Ti. 3:16-4:4
  - 3. Take advantage of every opportunity. v. 20b-21a I Tim. 4:13 II Tim. 4:1f
  - 4. Equip the flock to serve God. Eph. 4:11-12 II Tim. 2:2
  
- C. Protect the Lord's flock. v. 28-31 Ezek. 33:2-6 Titus 1:9-11 3:10 I Co. 5:13
  - 1. Why is this so important? v. 28c-30 Rev. 5:9 I Pe. 1:18-19 Ezek. 34:2-16
  - 2. How can this be done?
    - a. First watch yourself. v. 28a I Tim. 4:16 Mt. 26:31 I Co. 10:12
    - b. Courageously take decisive action to drive out the wolves who promote error or immorality. Rev. 2:2 I Tim. 5:20
  
- D. Love God's flock. v. 35-38 Ps. 23:1,5b John 10:11-13 Mt. 9:36 Luke 15:4
  - 1. Being an Elder involves a lot more than teaching, preaching and leading.
  - 2. Care deeply for the Lord's sheep. v. 19b, 31b, 36-38 Ro. 9:2-3 II Co. 2:4 11:28-29 I Thess. 2:7 5:14 Luke 13:34-35
  - 3. Be devoted to praying for them. Acts 6:4 Js. 5:14

#### IV. Conclusion.

- A. To the Shepherds. I Pet. 5:1-5 II Tim. 4:6-8
  
- B. To congregation. Heb. 13:17 I Th. 5:25 Eph. 6:19
  
- C. Jesus is our perfect Chief Shepherd. I Pe. 5:4 2:25 Ps. 23 78:52 100:3 John 10:11 Mt. 2:6 Ezek. 34:23f Isa. 40:11 Heb. 13:20

#### Discussion questions

1. What do we learn from the book of Acts about the meetings of the early church?
2. What do we learn from the New Testament about the government of the early church?
3. How can we know who is to lead the church?
4. Is there any difference between Elders, Overseers (Bishops) and Pastors?
5. What relationship should the Elders have with each other?
6. What are the advantages of plural leadership?
7. How are the Elders to lead the flock?
8. How are the Elders to feed the flock?
9. Why must Elders protect the flock?
10. What are the responsibilities of church members (sheep) to their Elders (shepherds)?
11. How is Jesus the perfect Shepherd?