



# Systematic Theology

A study of the major doctrines of Scripture

TOPIC 6 – THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH  
LESSON 100 – CHURCH GOVERNMENT

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# The Head of the Church

- ▶ Jesus Christ is head of the Church (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:19; 1 Cor. 11:3).
- ▶ His sovereign Lordship was bestowed upon Him by the Father (Mat. 11:27; John 3:35; 5:22; Acts 2:36; Phil. 2:9-11).
- ▶ He is the Church's Supreme Authority ruling by His Word through His Spirit.
- ▶ Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."
- ▶ In His earthly ministry Jesus demonstrated divine authority and sovereign power over demons (Matt. 8:32; 12:22), disease (Matt. 4:23-24), sin (Matt. 9:6), the weather (Mark 4:39), the elements (Matt. 14:19-20; Matt. 15:36-37), and death (Mark 5:41-42; John 11:43-44; John 10:18).

# The Head of the Church

- ▶ Jesus rules heaven and earth as everything was created and is sustained by Him (John 1:1-4; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:3; Eph. 1:20-21; John 5:27-29; 17:2).
- ▶ One day all of creation will bow and confess this truth, “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. 2:9-11).
- ▶ Submission to the absolute Lordship of Christ is not optional for the believer. We are called to submit joyfully to His commands and rule over us (John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10; 1 John 5:3; 2 John 6).

# The Head of the Church

- ▶ Jesus, as Head of the Church, is not only her supreme authority but is also the source of her salvation. He is the “author and finisher” or “founder and perfecter” of our faith (Heb. 12:2), having purchased through His death “a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14).
- ▶ Christ is the cornerstone on which the church is founded (1 Peter 2:4-8), established by Him (Matt. 16:18) and built upon the apostolic witness to the truth about Him (Eph. 2:20).
- ▶ 1 Cor. 3:11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.



# Rule through Gifted Leaders

- ▶ The absolute rule of Christ as Head of the Church is administered through godly leaders whom He has given as gifts to the church to lead His people (1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:7, 17).
- ▶ In Ephesians 4:11, Paul says of the ascended Christ, “He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.” (see 1 Cor. 12:28).
- ▶ The Apostles and Prophets played a unique foundational role in the establishment of the church, having been part of laying the foundation of the church.
- ▶ Ephesians 2:19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.

# Rule through Gifted Leaders

- ▶ By identifying the Apostles and Prophets with the foundation-laying stage of the church, Paul indicates that those offices were limited to the earliest stages of church history. The foundation of a building is laid once at the beginning of construction, so the age of the Apostles and Prophets occurred at the outset of church history and has not been repeated since.
- ▶ In this foundational role, the Apostles and Prophets declared the revelation of God's Word (Eph. 3:5; Acts 11:28; 21:10-11) and confirmed their message with miraculous signs (2 Cor. 12:12; Acts 8:6-7; Heb. 2:3-4).
- ▶ The second group of gifted leaders, evangelists and pastor-teachers, have been building upon this foundation since it was laid, by the faithful proclamation and preaching of the Word (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

# Rule through Gifted Leaders

- ▶ Apostle – “sent one”, applied to ambassadors, representatives, or messengers.
- ▶ The term used to delineate the office in the church is limited to those chosen and appointed personally by Christ, to be His authorized representatives (Gal. 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1; Jude 17).
- ▶ Additions only include Matthias as a replacement for Judas (Acts 1:26), and Paul, who is said to be a lesser Apostle sent to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15-17; 1 Cor. 15:7-9; 2 Cor. 11:5). Paul indicates he was the last to receive this calling in 1 Cor. 15:8.
- ▶ Qualifications for those called as Apostles:
  - ▶ 1. Chosen directly by Christ – Mark 3:14; Luke 6:13; Acts 1:2, 24; Gal. 1:1
  - ▶ 2. They were able to perform the signs of an Apostle, authenticating miracles – 2 Cor. 12:12; Matt. 10:1-2; Acts 1:5-8; 2:43; 4:33; 5:12; Heb. 2:3-4
  - ▶ 3. They were eye-witnesses to the resurrected Christ - Acts 1:21-25; 10:39-41; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:7-8

# Rule through Gifted Leaders

- ▶ Prophets – “one who speaks in the place of”, a spokesman
- ▶ In the Old and New Testament, prophets were primarily distinguished by their reception and delivery of new revelation from God (Acts 11:27-28). They also expounded on already revealed truth (Acts 13:1).
- ▶ Due to the constant threat of false prophets (Matt. 7:15; Acts 20:29-31), the Prophets message was to be tested against the truth that had been previously revealed (1 Cor. 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:20-22).
- ▶ Doctrinal accuracy was required in the Old and New Testament (Deut. 13:1-5; Acts 20:29-30; 2 Peter 2:1).
- ▶ Moral purity and revelatory accuracy was also necessary (Matt. 7:15-17; 2 Peter 2:2-3; Jer. 23:14-16; Deut. 18:20-22; Ezek. 13:3-9).
- ▶ Once the foundation was established, the work of Apostles and Prophets continues only through the proclamation of the revelation which they have given us in the Word of God.



# Rule through Gifted Leaders

- ▶ Evangelists – proclaimers of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- ▶ Though all believers are commanded to take the good news of the gospel to the unconverted (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). Some are especially gifted as evangelists.
- ▶ Philip is described as an evangelist (Acts 21:8) and Timothy is told to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim. 4:5).
- ▶ Evangelists aim to make disciples by the preaching of the gospel, incorporating new believers into the church through baptism and building them up in the faith through teaching.
- ▶ Evangelists serve primarily in the role of church planters, missionaries, and those within the congregation uniquely gifted at reaching the lost (as recognized by the congregation).

# Rule through Gifted Leaders

- ▶ Pastor-Teachers – “shepherds” who serve the church by protecting and feeding them through the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, defending against error and faithfully equipping the congregation for service to the Lord and one another.
- ▶ The Lord Jesus is the great Shepherd (Heb. 13:20-21; 1 Peter 2:25) and those whom He has given to the church as pastors are to be His under-shepherds (1 Peter 5:2).
- ▶ Their primary service is feeding the sheep (John 21:15-17), a responsibility which they accomplish through teaching the Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Peter 2:2-3).
- ▶ They are to be devoted primarily then to the ministry of prayer and the Word (Acts 6:4). The sheep are best served through consistent, solid teaching.

# Rule through Gifted Leaders

- ▶ Scriptural terms for the pastor-teacher include: bishop, elder, and shepherd.
- ▶ Episkopas – translated “bishop” in most Bibles, the word means an “overseer, guardian, decision maker, or manager.”
- ▶ 1 Peter 2:25 – Christ is the “overseer” of our souls
- ▶ Philippians 1:1 – the leaders of the church at Philippi are called “bishops”
- ▶ 1 Timothy 3:1 – The position of “bishop” is a good one to be desired by qualified men
- ▶ 1 Timothy 3:2 – A “bishop” must meet qualifications listed in vs. 2-7
- ▶ Acts 20:28 – told to shepherd the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made them “overseers”
- ▶ In Romans and Greek usage culturally, the “overseer” (episkopas) was an authority figure representing Caesar in a conquered territory (Pontius Pilate was the Roman episkopas in Jerusalem). The term signified the person’s authority, their accountability to a higher authority above them, and their task of introducing a new order of life to a conquered people.

# Rule through Gifted Leaders

- ▶ Presbuteros – translated “elders” it means one who is older or mature. It also refers to a “council of elders” (plural).
- ▶ Acts 14:23 – a new church is planted by appointing elders
- ▶ Acts 20:17 – Paul sent for the elders at the church in Ephesus
- ▶ 1 Peter 1:1; 5:1-2 – the churches scattered over Asia had elders
- ▶ Biblically, the elders “rule” the church led by the Spirit and guided by the Word of God (1 Cor 1:10; Eph 4:3; Phil 1:27; Phil 2:2).



# Rule through Gifted Leaders

- ▶ Poimen – translated “pastor” , the word means shepherd, one who cares for, protects, and leads
- ▶ Hebrews 13:20-21 – Christ is our shepherd
- ▶ 1 Timothy 5:17 – the labor of shepherding refers to effort, not amount
- ▶ 1 Timothy 3:1-7 – They must be qualified men
- ▶ Titus 1:6-9 – Restatement of qualifications
- ▶ Ephesians 4:11 – they are given by Christ to His Church
- ▶ The pastor then is a shepherd, serving under and appointed by Christ to lead, feed, and protect the flock, the local church. The pastor’s model of course is Christ, who Himself is the Good Shepherd.

# Rule through Gifted Leaders

- ▶ In examining these terms then we see that they do describe one man in one office, that of a pastor-teacher. The term elder refers to who the man is (his identity as mature in the faith), the term overseer refers to what he does (his job as manager), and the term pastor refers to his heart as he does the job (his character as a shepherd).
- ▶ Scriptural Accountability for the Elder:
  - ▶ 1. Ephesians 4:11 – Christ as Lord of His Church gives pastor-teachers to the Church
  - ▶ 2. Acts 20:28-31 – the Holy Spirit leads in the appointment of elders
  - ▶ 3. 1 Timothy 4:14; Titus 1:5 – The elders, with the congregation, appoint new elders
  - ▶ 4. Hebrews 13:17 – The elders are accountable to God for his work and his flock
  - ▶ 5. Ephesians 5:23 – Christ is head (Lord) of the Church
  - ▶ 6. 1 Timothy 5:19-22 – The elders are accountable to each other and the Church

# Rule through Gifted Leaders

- ▶ Scriptural Responsibility of the Congregation to their Pastors:
- ▶ 1. Hebrews 13:7 – Obey them, remembering and following their faith
- ▶ 2. Hebrews 13:17 – Be submissive to them
- ▶ 3. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 – Recognize him and his authority, esteeming him highly in love, maintaining peace in the Body
- ▶ 4. 1 Tim. 5:17-19 – Count him worthy of double honor, remember that he is worthy of his wages and to be supported by the ministry (see also Matt. 10:10; Luke 10:7; 1 Cor. 9:9-14), do not receive an accusation against him unless it is made by two or three witnesses.

# Christ's Rule through His Word

- ▶ Ultimately then we see that all authority in the church flows from the Headship of Christ, mediated through the right teaching and preaching of His Word to His people but those called and chosen by Him to serve the church as His ministers.
- ▶ Second London Baptist Confession of Faith, 1689:
- ▶ “The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience. The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and by which must be examined all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, and doctrines of men and private spirits can be no other than the Holy Scripture, delivered by the Spirit. And in the sentence of Scripture we are to rest, for it is in Scripture, delivered by the Spirit, that our faith is finally resolved.”