

LESSON 8



CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Scripture Texts: Isaiah 9:6-7; 1 Corinthians 11:3; James 4:12; Psalm 132:13; 1 Peter 5:1-4; 1 Timothy 5:17-21

We have seen that God has organized the Church of God, set each member in his appointed place, and provided gifts of the Spirit to enable each to carry on His work. Now how does this organism operate?

The gift comes first, then the position. For example: an elder holds the position of elder because of the spiritual gifts Christ gave him which made him an elder. Any authority he has the right to use came with and because of the gifts. Neither authority nor ability can be his because of having been chosen by man to occupy the position. Since elders have duties to the church, the church also has duties to the elders.

MEMORY VERSE: *"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church."*

Ephesians 1:22

The Ruler

Isaiah 9:6-7 Christ is the **child** and **son** spoken of here. **The government shall be upon his shoulder.** His government is to increase forever—growing and prospering. He is to govern **his kingdom**, His church. He was born King over it—**upon the throne of David.** He would **order it**—build and organize it, set the parts in order (1 Corinthians 12:18). He did **establish it with judgment and with justice.** It will last forever. He is ruling over the church now. Its government is upon His shoulder now. All authority rests in Him. Any attempt to set up a system of church government other than He has already established is wrong. Any attempt to legislate, either for the governmental organization or for the doctrinal belief of the church, is treason. Only when the headship of Christ is recognized in all the body can it be the true Church of God (Ephesians 1:22). In all phases of the government Christ has authority.

The Chain of Command

First Corinthians 11:3 Since it is true that Christ is the Head, the King over His government, it is plain that He sets subjects under His command. **The head of Christ is God. The head of every man is Christ. The head of the woman is the man.** When the wife recognizes the authority of her husband and obeys him, and the husband recognizes the authority of Christ and obeys Him as Christ recognizes the authority of God and obeys Him, then will the church be governed as God planned. God, Christ, man, and woman (Ephesians 5:22-32). It is in Christ's plan to call and place elders in every city where there are people who desire to be governed by God's law. Selecting a true elder, or pastor, is Christ's method of placing His law with His people. Also, Christ places on the pastor the responsibility of bringing judgment on those who fail to obey His law or recognize proper authority. The pastor has a great responsibility to Christ, and the saint has a great responsibility to the pastor. The body of Christ cannot survive without a true pastor, or undershepherd, to lead them.

The Lawmaker

James 4:12 **There is one lawgiver.** This **one** referring to God. The head of an institution is its lawmaker. **For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us** (Isaiah 33:22). Government goes out from where the king is, because there is where the laws are made. There is but one head; hence there can be but one lawgiver. No body can function with two heads. Neither can a body function properly with two sets of laws. The Bible only is our rule of faith. It is a rod of iron (Revelation 2:27; 19:15). It cannot be bent or broken.

Zion, the Lord's Habitation

Psalm 132:13 **The Lord hath chosen Zion . . . for his habitation.** Psalm 48:1-2 tells us that Mount Zion is **the city of the great King.** A mountain is a large and immovable result of God's work. So is the church. The only headquarters over any congregation is the one in Heaven; it has no earthly headquarters (Hebrews 12:22-23). The Church of God is thoroughly divine, not a society. It is not monarchical (papal rule by one), not oligarchical (episcopal rule by a few), not republican (presbyterial rule by elected representatives), nor is it democratic (congregational rule by the people). It is a theocracy (specifically ruled by the Word of God by divine revelation).

Each member receives direction from the head, the pastor, and not from some other member, a committee, or a headquarters of men. Our hand does not tell our feet, ears, and eyes what to do, but all work cooperatively with the head. Thus, Christ gives direction to all (Colossians 2:18-19). The church recognizes what God has done, instead of trying to get God to recognize what man has done. The setting into the body may not all take place with the new birth, but as we dedicate our bodies a living sacrifice, and as we grow daily in grace and knowledge, God may see fit to entrust us with more and greater responsibilities as it pleases Him.

The Elder's Duty to the Church

First Peter 5:1-4 Peter, an elder, and under the inspiration of God, wrote exhorting elders to **feed the flock of God**—the Church of God. What are elders to feed them? Spiritual food, Christ and His Word, the true sayings of God (John 6:51-63; II Timothy 4:2). Elders are to take the **oversight** of the local church. This is the place of service God has given to elders. They are pastors. They are to serve, not as being forced, but gladly, with their will blended with God's will. Not for money, but from love for the Lord and His work. Pastors are not to drive, but to lead. Any authority a pastor has is a delegated authority to be used only at the order of Jesus Christ. Every elder must give account of his work to **the chief Shepherd**, Christ the Head of the church.

The Church's Duty to the Elder

First Timothy 5:17-21 Since the elders have duties to the church, the church also has duties to the elders. The same love that moves the pastor to be true to the church causes the church to give respect and honor to the pastor. Even though the pastor is not preaching for money, the church is responsible to see that his financial need is taken care of. **The labourer is worthy of his reward.**

No individual with a love for God and His church should receive an accusation against the pastor, in any case, except there be **two or three witnesses** to establish the charge (2 Corinthians 13:1). Whenever God makes it plain that He is blessing the work of an elder the church will be in agreement with what God has established. Read Hebrews 13:17. When it is very evident that the man of God is watching out for our souls, it will be easy for the church to **obey and submit** to his rule. The church stands as responsible to give account to God for fulfilling their duty to their pastor as the pastor is responsible to give account for his watch for their souls. The secret for this plan

to run smoothly is that the elder and each member be filled with the Spirit and obey Christ. God's purpose for His church is all good. True members of Christ's body have a disposition to carry out God's good purpose. God's spiritual gifts enable His people to carry out His purpose.

JUST A THOUGHT

God puts no ring in your nose or chain about your neck.