

Scriptural Organization of the Church

Int.

1. Aim: To show God's truth about how the church is organized, explaining some of the errors of man, and answering some questions asked about this important subject.
2. Phil. 1:1 NKJV "Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:"
3. Religions today have changed the organization of the church from God's Plan
 - a. Hear of "Synods", Presbyteries, councils, Conferences, & General Assemblies
 - b. Men legislate rules and laws to govern their manmade churches
 - c. Therefore they do not have the church organized scripturally
 - (1) The preacher is called the pastor, reverend, father
 - (2) The leaders of the churches are not the same as they were in the N.T.
 - (3) Some churches have only deacons - Even women leaders
 - (4) Others have scriptural titles but do not perform scriptural duties
4. Let us notice some of the false ways of organizing and God's way of organizing the church and answer some questions often asked about this subject.

Discussion

I. FALSE MAYS OF ORGANIZING THE CHURCH

A. Pastor System

1. Most religious groups have what they call a pastor
2. He is the preacher, minister, elder or bishop all in one
3. He is the overseer - the ruler of the church
4. I am not the pastor of this church - I am the preacher

5. What is a Pastor? — Eph. 4:11 Acts 20:28 I Pet. 5:2
 - a. Pastor - to furnish pasturage or food to nourish, to cherish ones body, to supply the requisites for the soul's needs -- of the overseers of the church (Thayer p. 527)
 - b. Acts 20:28 Overseers = bishop
 - c. Bishop used interchangeably with the word elder Tit. 1:5-7 -It refers to the same man
 - d. Acts 20:28 refers to elders and that they are to feed - pastor the church, for they are overseers
 - e. Pastor - to feed, to tend a flock, keep sheep (Thayer p. 527)
 - f. Pastor - Eph. 4:11 - the presiding officer, manager, director of any assembly, of the overseers of the Christ-an assemblies

6. Churches that have the preacher as their pastor are unscripturally organized! Why?
 - a. Plurality of elders or pastors is required - Tit. 1:5 Acts 14:23
 - b. Preachers are often not qualified to be an elder or pastor.
 - (1) Novice - I Tim. 3:4-6
 - (2) Wife - Tit. 1:6
 - (3) Children - Tit. 1:6

7. The term pastor is never used in the N.T. to refer to the preacher, or the minister of the evangelist

B. DEACON SYSTEM

1. Some churches have what they call deacons.
2. This is a scriptural office for they are mentioned in Phil. 1:1 I Tim. 3 and other places
3. But a church system that only has a preacher and deacons is not scripturally organized. No record of a church with deacons without elders!!!

II. GOD'S WAY OF ORGANIZING THE CHURCH

A. Christ is the Head

1. Col. 1:18, Eph. 1:22, 23 Mt. 28:18
2. There is no need or use for any man to claim to be the universal head of the church for Christ is the head

B. Each congregation is self-governing, autonomous

1. Make decisions and act on them as an independent body
2. Each congregation was independent in N.T. times
3. There were no conferences, synods or general assemblies to make rules [The apostles met in Acts 15 to discuss the problem about Circumcision]
4. No church had any authority over any other
5. Each was independent to direct its own work
6. They followed the law of Christ

C. Organization of a local congregation

1. Elders— Acts 11:30 first mention

- a. I Tim. 3:1-7
- b. Tit. 1:5 Titus to appoint elders
- c. Acts 14:23 Elders in every church -- Barnabas and Paul
- d. Phil. 1:1
- e. Also called overseers - Acts 20:28
- f. Also called Bishops - Tit. 1:5&7
- g. Also called Pastors - Acts 20:28
- h. Overseers were to feed - Eph. 4:11
- i. Also called presbyter - I Tim. 4:14
- j. They were to shepherd - I Pet. 5:4
- k. DUTIES ——
 - (1) Oversee - rule - see that laws are carried out
 - (2) Feed - teach
 - (3) Watch - keep pure

2. DEACONS

- a. Phil. 1:1 - addressed to deacons
- b. I Tim. 3:8-13 qualifications
- c. The deacons are not the same as elders
- d. Duties
 - (1) Serve
 - (2) To minister to, wait on
 - (3) Acts 6

3. Members - "Saints" - Phil. 1:1
 - a. Preacher - evangelist
 - (1) Minister - a personal or public attendant
 - (2) Preacher - herald, one who proclaims
 - (3) Evangelist - announces good tidings
 - b. Bible Class teachers
 - c. Song leader
 - d. All other members
 - e. Gal. 3:26-29

III. QUESTIONS OFTEN ASKED ABOUT CHURCH ORGANIZATION

- A. Should Every congregation have Elders?
 1. Yes, nothing is more plainly taught in the N.T.
 2. Jerusalem - they had elders along with the apostles - Acts 15:6 "The apostles and the elders were gathered together"
 3. Paul appointed in every church - Acts 14:23 "...appointed for them elders in every church..."
 4. Ephesus — Acts 20:28
 5. Thessalonica - I Thes. 5:12 "...are over you in the Lord..."
 6. Philippi - Phil. 1:1
 7. Paul's charge to Titus - Tit. 1:5
 8. It is God's pattern that every church have elders and deacons

B. Suppose there are no qualified Elders?

1. If there are no men to meet the requirements and qualifications of an elder then you cannot appoint them.
2. It is better to remain scripturally unorganized than to become unscripturally organized
3. In a congregation of zealous Christians men should soon grow to the divine pattern laid down for an elder

C. MUST A CONGREGATION OBEY ITS' ELDERS? Yes

1. Heb. 13:17 "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."
2. Obey = agree, have confidence, trust
3. MKJV = "Yield to your leaders, and be submissive"
4. One reason some congregations do not have elders is because some members who do not have the qualifications for an elder, love to have the preeminence. Therefore they discourage any desire to appoint elders.
5. If elders are appointed then these people will ignore them and say "they are not fit for elders" in rebellion.
6. We are to allow the elders to have the oversight of the congregation
7. Submit yourselves - Heb. 13:17 = surrender self, yield

D. IS IT NECESSARY TO APPOINT ELDERS?

1. Some feel that when a man does the work of an elder he is then an elder and needs no appointment.
2. This is not a scriptural way, nor an orderly way of going about having elders
 - a. Some will be jealous
 - b. Others will accuse the person of wanting to "run" things!
 - c. The congregation will not submit.
3. In the N.T. elders were appointed, they did not just assume the position
4. Qualifications are given as to the kind of men to appoint. This was unnecessary if any man who does the work of an elder is thereby an elder
 - a. What if a "novice" does the work of an elder
 - b. Suppose a man who is not ruling his own house well does the work.
5. Elders are to be appointed!!

E. What does it mean "Desire the Office" ?

1. I Tim. 3:1 "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work."
2. Desire - "to reach out after" "To stretch forward to" "To give oneself up to the love of,..."
3. Desireth - "To wish for " "Crave" or "Long for"
4. Paraphrase - "If a man seeks the office of a bishop and gives himself up to the preparation for it, he is desiring an honorable work."
 - a. He does not work political schemes to influence the members to elect him
 - b. He aspires to the office by working to possess the qualifications to be able to do the work, and to merit the respect and esteem of a congregation that would be willing to submit to him."

CONCLUSION

1. Many in religion want to eliminate God's laws of organization in religion and organize boards, committees etc.
 2. God's laws are just as binding with respect to organization and officers - as any other thing.
 3. Why have Elder and Deacons?
 - a. God's plan is best, it is perfect.
 - b. To help a church to grow strong, to be pure and to do the work that God intended.
 - c. If God's pattern is followed the church will work regularly, systematically and enthusiastically.
-
-

Sermon by Arthur Pigman - Sunday Evening - Dec. 7, 2008
Evans Church of Christ
515 Gibbs Road
Evans, Ga. 30809
706-855-1249
evanscoc@bellsouth.net
www.evansgachurchofchrist.org