

The Shepherds Handbook

**(A Guide for Elders, Bible Teachers & Students of God's
Word)**

Edited by Albert Fairweather



*"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly
dividing the word of truth" 2 Timothy 2:15*

What We Believe

We believe in:

- [1] The Bible as the inspired Word of God, our sole authority for doctrine and practice.
- [2] The Trinity of the Godhead.
- [3] The Deity and sinless humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- [4] The personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit.
- [5] The creation and fall of man.
- [6] The sacrificial death of our Lord Jesus Christ for the sin of the whole world and His bodily resurrection and ascension.
- [7] The personal and pre-millennial return of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- [8] The resurrection of the body.
- [9] The judgment of the living and the dead by the Lord Jesus Christ.
- [10] The eternal blessedness of the righteous and the eternal punishment of the wicked.
- [11] The reality and personality of Satan, who was created by God, but fell through pride.
- [12] The necessity of the new birth for salvation.
- [13] The maintenance of good works and godly living by all professing Christians.
- [14] The eternal security of the believer.
- [15] The baptism by immersion of all believers.
- [16] That Apostles and Prophets belonged to the foundation period of the Church and they and their special gifts of miracles, healings and tongues are no longer with us today, since we have the completed Scriptures. However, we believe that if God so wills, He still heals in answer to prayer.
- [17] A plurality of Elders as the spiritual guides of the local church, supported by Deacons, with no outside controlling body.
- [18] The observance of the Lord's Supper every Sunday, with meetings also for prayer and teaching.
- [19] In the local church, men and women have differing roles and functions. Men are to fill leadership roles and lead in all public ministry and prayer. In meetings of the local church, men should pray with heads uncovered, women with heads covered, to signify Christ's headship.
- [20] All members of the body of Christ (the Church) should be received until such time as they find they are unable to support the teaching as outlined in this Elders Handbook.
- [21] We believe in the autonomy of each local church.

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All quotations are from the New King James Version of the Holy Bible.

Some reasons for this Handbook

This handbook has been prepared as a guide for Elders, Bible Teachers and Students of God's word as they seek to lead and teach local churches in the pattern set forth in the Word of God. It will also be a help to new Christians and can be used to teach group **Bible Schools** and **Classes** as well as in **churches**.

In these studies, we may not always be following the practices and doctrines of the various denominations developed over the centuries, but we will be looking at **what the Apostles taught**, and what **the early churches practised** during the first century of the church era as recorded in the Bible.

Please do not be surprised by what is taught, but be like the Bereans who searched the scriptures and make sure that it accords with the Bible, and carefully read all Bible references (Acts 17:10-12).

The Importance of the Word of God

Elders and Bible Teachers and all believers need an understanding that God's Word is to be faithfully **taught** and **obeyed**. The following Bible references teach that all **Scripture**:

- **Is inspired by God** (2 Timothy 3:16-17). It did not come by the will of man (2 Peter 1:21).
- **Is everlasting and will never pass away** (Matthew 24:35).
- **Is powerful, discerning and searching** (Hebrews 4:12-13).
- **Is more necessary than bread** (Matthew 4:4).
- **Cleanses and is life changing** (Psalm 119:9; 1 Peter 2:1-3).
- **Sanctifies positionally and personally** (Acts 20:32 Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:18-21).
- **We need ears to hear and a heart to obey** (Matthew 13:9-17; 1 Samuel 15:22-23).

All believers should have a great reverence for the Bible, as it is God's Word to guide in all areas of our life and faith. It teaches the way to heaven and how to please the Lord. King Saul lost his kingdom and his life because he rejected God's directions and failed to obey the Word of the Lord:

Samuel said to King Saul: *"Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king"* (1 Sam 15:22-23).

The Word of God equips all Christians, Elders, Deacons and Bible Teachers for their special ministry (2 Tim. 3:16-17) and should be carefully studied (2 Tim. 2:15). Note the apostle Paul's parting words to the Ephesian elders: *"And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified"* (Acts 20:32).

Chapter 1

What is the Church?

The Church is first mentioned by our Lord in Matthew 16:13 to 20.

The word for **'Church'** is the Greek word **'Ekklesia'** and means **'a called-out company, gathering or assembly.'** Certain Greeks were elected to form the **'Ekklesia'** (an elect Council) to manage their city affairs; and so, Jesus would call out of all nations *'a people for His name,'* His elect people, from both Jew and Gentile, to form **His Ekklesia or Church** (Acts 15:14). There is the **Church Universal**, made up of all believers, and the **local church** where believers gather to worship the Lord Jesus Christ.

I use a capital 'C' for this Universal Church. The word **Universal** is not found in the Bible, but I use it to describe how all believers **from Pentecost to the present time**, are in the Church, regardless of their denomination. **The local church in this Study will have a small 'c' for church.** This will help us to distinguish between the two. The **context** in our Bibles tells us if it is a local gathering of the church or if it is the Universal Church, often called *'the church of God'*.

The Church is not found in the Old Testament, for Paul wrote that it was a **new revelation**: *"that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets"* (Ephesians 3:3-5).

The Holy Spirit and the Church

Jesus told His disciples that after He returned to heaven, He would pray to the Father to send the Holy Spirit to dwell **'in'** His disciples. Before this He was **'with'** the disciples (Read John 7:37-39; 14:15-18).

In answer to His prayer, the Father sent the Holy Spirit **on the day of Pentecost, 50 days after Jesus arose from the grave** (Acts 2). This is when the Church was formed, and since that time, all who believe are baptized by the Holy Spirit into **one body, the Church** (Read 1 Corinthians 12:13). The Church is called a body and also a building, a holy temple, where believers are being built together for a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22).

We call this Church the **'Universal Church'**. It is composed of believers, both Jew and Gentile, from all around the world. Many are now in heaven, and when Jesus returns as He has promised to do (John 14:1-3), He will then take His people who are still on earth (the Church) home to heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Pentecost means 'Fiftieth'. This Jewish Old Testament festival was held 50 days after Christ arose from among the dead. This fulfilled this Feast given to Moses. All these Feasts of the Lord were fulfilled, or will be fulfilled by our Lord Jesus Christ. Read carefully Leviticus Chapter 23

Jesus and His Church

Matthew 16:13-16. The Lord Jesus asked His disciples the most important question ever asked: ***"Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"*** The disciples had various answers, but Peter had the right answer: ***"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"***. Our heavenly Father revealed this to Peter, as He does to all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour from sin - Read Matthew 11:25-30.

Matthew 16:17-18. Then Jesus said ***"...and you are Peter*** (Greek **'Petros'** - meaning 'a small stone') ***and on this rock*** (Greek **'Petra'**- 'a huge foundation rock' – Christ Himself) ***I will build My Church"***. Notice the different meanings for the word **'rock'**. Peter, A small rock; Jesus, the great foundation rock.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the 'Rock of Ages' on which to build our house of life (1 Peter 2:6-8). Jesus said; ***"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock"*** (Matthew 7:21-29. The storms of life cannot move us from **this foundation**.

Matthew 16:19. Keys open doors, and Peter was given **keys** to open the **door of salvation** firstly to the **Jews** (Acts Chapter 2); then to the **Samaritans** (Acts Chapter 8); and then to the **Gentiles** (Acts Chapter 10).

Matthew 4:19. Peter had been called to follow Jesus – for He said to him, ***"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men"*** If we respond to His call, He also has a plan for us, as He did for Peter, and He will also **make** our lives useful to God, if we use the gifts and abilities He has given us.

1 Corinthians 10:32. There are three divisions of humanity. The Bible says, ***"Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks (Gentiles) or to the church of God"***. The Church is formed from both Jew and Gentile. If you are not a Jew, then you are a Gentile, of the nations. The Church is built on Christ Himself, not on Peter who denied his Lord three times and was later rebuked by Paul (Galatians Ch. 2).

Peter does not hold the keys to heaven – Christ holds these!

The Church and Israel

The Church is not under the Law of Moses, for the Law was given to Israel only. The Church is His **new creation** and under **grace** (1 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:8-10), ***"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ"*** (Read John 1:17).

The Church is first mentioned by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 16:13-19, and was **still in the future** when He said, ***"I will build My Church"***. He did not say ***"I have been building My Church"***.

The true Church began at **Pentecost**, 50 days after Christ rose from the dead (Acts Chapter 2), and will be raptured, 'caught up' to heaven to meet Jesus in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Israel will return to their land in unbelief, as is happening today after 2000 years of dispersion among the nations. After the Church is raptured, the 'great tribulation', the time of **'Jacob's trouble'** will begin (Jeremiah 30:7). Jacob is Israel. When Israel is brought to her knees, she will turn to the Lord, and be restored spiritually, as is taught in Zechariah Chapters 12 to 14 and Romans Chapters 9 to 11. The book of Isaiah Chapter 11 tells of Israel's great future.

Today the Lord is taking from both Jew and Gentiles a people for His name to form His Church.

Please note: The nation of **Israel** was promised the land of Canaan as an **earthly inheritance** conditional on their obedience to the Law of Moses. The **Church** has a **heavenly inheritance**, based on faith alone.

In contrast to Israel, the **Universal Church** is God's **new creation** that was formed at **Pentecost** fifty days after Christ arose (Acts Chapter 2) and is given a spiritual inheritance in Christ in heavenly places by grace and subject to faith alone (Ephesians 2:1-10; 1 Peter 1:3-5).

The Church is the virgin bride of Christ and the **body** of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 1:22-23).

Israel is the adulterous wife of the Lord, put aside because of her unfaithfulness, yet she will be restored in Christ's coming Kingdom: *"Surely, as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, So have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel," says the LORD*" (Jeremiah 3:20).

"For your Maker is your husband, The LORD of hosts is His name; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. "For the LORD has called you Like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, Like a youthful wife when you were refused," Says your God. "For a mere moment I have forsaken you, But with great mercies I will gather you. "With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you," Says the LORD, your Redeemer. "For this is like the waters of Noah to Me; For as I have sworn That the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth, So have I sworn That I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you" (Isaiah 54:5-9).

For the final scenes describing the saving and restoration of Israel as a people and nation, read Zechariah Chapters 12 to 14 and Romans Chapters 9 to 11. Her future is glorious.

Chapter 2.

The Local Church

The second mention of the church is in Matthew 18:1-20

Teaching and shepherding the flock in local churches is a work especially dear to the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ who through the apostle Paul charged **the elders** at Ephesus: *"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood"* For this important teaching, read Acts 20:17-36.

Shepherding the flock also has its own special reward, for the apostle Peter said to Elders: *"...when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away"* (Read 1 Peter 5:1-5).

In Matthew Chapter 18 verses 1 to 20 we find the teaching Jesus gave the disciples preparing them for the time when local churches would be formed. He first mentioned a local church in Mathew 18:17. Remember, the Church was still future as He taught the disciples! The book of Acts teaches that when people were saved, they were **gathered together** in local churches (**Acts 2:42; 14:23**). All believers should seek to meet with a Bible believing church. Jesus taught His disciples to gather **in His name** (Matthew 18:20).

The local church is not **the building**, but the believers who meet in the building. All **believers** are members of the true Church, the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23).

Note these points about the local church

1. Matthew 18:1-4. The members should all be the **converted**. We must come to Christ as little children, humbling ourselves, confessing our sins and trusting in Jesus as our Saviour from all sin. Coming as children, God begins a new work in us, and promises to complete it (Philippians 1:6). We have much to learn, and much of our worldly ways to unlearn.

2. Matthew 18:5, 15-18. The church should receive into its fellowship **all** those whom the Lord has received. But we must **reject some** who **cause divisions** and put away **those** who live **immoral lives** and will not repent. It is the local church which must do this. (Read Romans 16:17-18; Titus 3:10-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5).

3. Matthew 18:6-14. We should not stumble or despise or cause to sin those who are His children. We must live lives pleasing to the Lord before believers and before the world, watching our **words and our ways**, not leading astray any who are observing our lives. For we read *"that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,"* (Philippians 1:10). In this we also have the example of Jesus: *"And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him"* (John 8:29).

4. Matthew 18:15-18. The local church should be a place where sin is **not tolerated** and where Bible teaching is followed to deal with it; for the local church has authority to **discipline** and should so do. If our brother sins, the first step is to go to him **alone** and try to win him from his sin. We should not spread abroad his sin. Next, if he will not listen, take two or more to confront him in a loving, caring way. In all this we must remember we also are prone to sin and must seek to **restore** the brother (Galatians 6:1). If he refuses to repent, then it must be taken to the church for all the members to decide. If we do this in a godly caring way, this will be bound, applied and endorsed by the Lord in heaven.

5. Matthew 18:19. The local church should be a place on earth where all learn to '**agree**', and this word means to 'sound together' in 'harmony' like many musical instruments, for when all 'agree' and walk in love and unity, then God can bless and prayer will be answered.

6. Matthew 18:20. This is the simplest form of a local church: Jesus said: "*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them*". We do not gather to any human leader, a denominational structure or any cult; we gather to our Lord Jesus Christ, for He is Lord of all.

The Local church is unique

Each local church should be **autonomous**, and answerable to God alone. In Revelation Chapter 1 the Lord Jesus is seen walking among the golden lampstands which represented the seven churches He addressed in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. **Notice:**

Jesus, and later Paul, did not place one church over another; each was responsible to our Lord alone.
Each local church should aim to be self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating.

Reception Policy

While churches should receive the Lord's people in a loving and caring way (Romans 14:1; 15:7), they must not be open to receive any false teaching or problems some people may bring. It is the responsibility of the elders (and gifted Bible teachers) to teach in the local church, and the elders should meet with newcomers who have a differing belief to show them the true teaching (Titus 1:5-9).

The Bible teaches:

- a.** To take note of and avoid those who cause divisions and offences contrary to the true doctrine (Romans 16:17-18).
- b.** To put away from your fellowship those who are immoral, drunkards etc. (1 Corinthians 5:9-13).
- c.** To stand fast against legalistic observances. We are under grace, not the law of Moses (Galatians 5:1-5).
- d.** To reject after the second admonition a divisive man, that is anyone who is self-opinionated and will not be taught or corrected. He is a trouble maker causing divisions (Titus 3:10-11).

The Word of God teaches that the local church has the responsibility to maintain good order and uphold the doctrines that the apostles taught, and to refuse fellowship to those who promote error or live immoral lives.

We are called into liberty – the liberty to do what is **biblically right**. However, this is not the **license** to do what **we please** contrary to God's Word. A driver's licence gives us the liberty to drive a car, but not the license to drive on the wrong side of the road and endanger the lives of other people! It is not 'Christian liberty' to be disobedient to the Word of God.

"Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle" (2 Thess. 2:15).

Chapter 3

The Functioning of Local Churches

The book of Acts gives **examples** of what these first Christians and churches did – **their actions!**

The Epistles of Paul, James, Peter and John give believers and local churches teaching on what we should believe and how to live holy lives.

After the Holy Spirit was sent by the Father and the Church was formed (Acts 2:1-4) there were about 120 disciples in Jerusalem! Peter preached and 3000 were added (Acts 2:40-41).

These are the meetings of local churches

Acts 2:42. These first believers “...continued steadfastly in the apostles’ *doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers*” Note these four things the first Christians in Jerusalem “continued steadfastly” in **doing. They met together:**

1. For Teaching the apostles’ ‘doctrine’ (is teaching). The apostles simply taught what the Lord had taught them (Acts 1:1-3) and what He later revealed to them through the apostles. This is now found written in the New Testament and it is there for us to teach and obey (Acts 16:4).

The Bible is complete, for that which is ‘perfect’ has been written and nothing is to be added or taken away from its pages. The Word of God is the only ‘perfect’ or ‘complete’ thing in this world. (Read 1 Corinthians 13:8-10; Jude 3; Revelation 22:18-19).

2. For ‘Fellowship’. This word means ‘**things shared in common**’. We **enjoy together** the things of the Lord that we share in common through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. We also encourage and support one another along the journey of life. We have been called into this fellowship and are maintained in it by God Himself (1 Corinthians 1:9; 10:14-16; 1 John Chapter 1). We need a loving and caring ‘fellowship’ together.

3. For ‘The breaking of bread’. On the night when our Lord was betrayed, He told the disciples to do this in remembrance of Himself by partaking of **the bread and cup** (Luke 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-34). The **bread** reminds us that His body was broken for us on the cross. The **cup** that He shed His blood so our sins could be forgiven. We have redemption through His blood (Ephesians 1:7).

This was done on the “*first day of the week*”, the resurrection day, Sunday, when the local churches met (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2). God began His creation on the first day and ‘finished’ it on the sixth day. When Jesus died, He said ‘*It is finished*’ (John 19:30). He was in the tomb under the curse of a broken Law on the Sabbath (Saturday), but rose on the first day (Sunday). **Christians are His new creation** (2 Corinthians 5:17) and so should meet on the first day of the week to partake together the Lord’s supper.

4. ‘And prayers. The church began at a prayer meeting (Acts 1:14; 2:1) and continued in prayer (Acts 4:23-31; 12:12). A suitable time should be set aside for the church to meet for this when the members can be prayed for and many other needs.

From **1 Timothy 2:23-31** we learn that this is an apostolic “*first of all*” for local churches and therefore is very important. **The various aspects of prayer are:**

Supplications – why we pray – occasioned by a need felt.

Prayers – to whom we pray – to God in reverence and faith.

Intercessions – praying for others – we have freedom of access, confidence, holy intimacy of approach to our heavenly Father and can make all our requests known to Him.

Thanksgivings – reasons to pray - results from prayers answered and needs met.

For all men – for whom to pray - without partiality.

These are the meetings of a local church and should be times to enjoy fellowship together.

Meetings of the church and roles of men and women

The breaking of bread or Lord’s Supper: When the Lord instituted the Supper, He asked His disciples to “*do this in remembrance of Me*”. He used **the bread and wine** of the people among whom He lived. The bread used by churches will therefore vary from country to country.

The wine: it was most probably fermented grape juice diluted with water as many believe the custom of the Jews was at the time. Many poor and isolated tribal peoples have **no access to this** and so a suitable alternative may have to be used. Many believers will not drink alcoholic wine, and so I taught in Kenya to make black tea with sugar to sweeten, cool and use this for wine.

The bread: it is not possible to make bread like Jesus used, so in Kenya I taught the believers to make the bread from maize flour, for this is their bread. **God looks on the heart as we remember Him.** The bread and wine used by our Lord is not available today. There is no magic in these emblems; it is “**Only bread and only wine, yet to faith the solemn sign, of the heavenly and divine.**”

Worship: Before breaking bread, take time to **worship** the Lord in prayer, by singing suitable hymns and reading and meditating on Bible passages that tell us about Christ.

Any of **the brothers** may join in this worship, and not just the elders. The **entire congregation** is involved in the worship of God in singing and saying 'Amen!' Men in the church are free to lead through praise, thanksgiving, prayer, meditation or an exhortation from God’s Word befitting to the occasion as led by the

Holy Spirit. Being led by the Spirit does not preclude individual preparation. Participation should be orderly, timely, reverent, honouring to God and edifying to the body.

The brothers should lead in the above meetings of the church; the sisters should not take a public part. Principles relating to this are found in 1 Corinthians chapters 11 to 14 and in 1 Timothy chapter 2.

Over the centuries, believers have followed the Bible teaching, that in meetings of the church men should have heads uncovered and women should be covered. This is based on the teaching found in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16, and sets forth believers acknowledging:

- (a) The headship of Christ and the Father over men and women.
- (b) The original order of the creation of men and women.
- (c) That the angels are spectators to local churches displaying that headship.
- (d) Because it was the '*custom*', the '*customary usage*' or the '*practice*' of all the churches in Paul's day.

Note especially Paul's words: "*Therefore I urge you, imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church*" (1 Corinthians 4:16-17).

Corinth was a multi-cultural seaport, a melting pot of many cultures. What Paul taught here he taught in all churches, and it had nothing to do with **Corinthian culture**, but everything to do with **God's given order**. It was even contrary to Jewish practice, where men cover and women uncover in synagogue services.

Roles of men and women: In the home and local church men and women have differing 'roles'. However, women are not inferior to men, for all are "*one in Christ Jesus*" (Gal. 3:28). Women also have special gifts and God given ministries, especially teaching other women and children and in their witness outside church meetings (Titus 2:3-5; Philippians 4:3). Deborah prophesied but not in the Tabernacle (Judges 4:4-5) and Philip's four daughters prophesied, but not in church meetings (Acts 21:8-9). The Bible does not contradict itself.

While the husband is the head of the wife and she is to submit to him, **he should love her as Christ also loved the church** (Ephesians 5:22-33). He should seek to build her up in the faith and see that she reaches her full potential as a wife and mother, encouraging her to use and to develop her special gifts because she is also part of His body, the Church. The Christian home should be a place of Christian love and harmony, an example to those around who do not believe. In some cultures husbands beat their wives, but this should never happen in a Christian home. Priscilla assisted her husband Aquila in teaching Apollos, and in using their home for a new church (Acts 18:1-26, 1 Corinthians 16:19).

The windows of the church can be open to the winds of cultural changes, and a wisdom coming from a world view. Elders must resist changes that contradict biblical teaching. Laws are now made in many lands to legalise what God has prohibited. God will judge those who practice such things.

Chapter 4

The Leadership of Local Churches

You will notice that in this study we use the word 'Elder', 'Overseer', 'Deacon' and 'Teachers' as these are the words the Bible uses for the leaders, shepherds and servants of the churches. We do not use 'Bishop', 'Priest' 'Father', 'Reverend' or 'Pastor', as these are titles that set men over churches.

In these studies, we will be looking at **what the Apostles taught, as recorded in our Bibles**, and what **the early churches practised** during the first century of the church era, and not at the practices and doctrines of the various denominations developed over the centuries.

I have proven in church planting in Australia and East Africa that we can return to what was practised by the early church and it really works. God's ways are better than those devised by man.

Autonomy and leadership of local churches

Each local church in the New Testament was **autonomous and self-governing**, and was **answerable to the Lord alone**. In Revelation chapter 1 the Lord Jesus walked among **the golden lampstands** which **represented the seven churches** that He addressed in Chapters 2 and 3. Notice what He said to these churches; He did not place one church over another. **Each was responsible to Him alone**. Paul addressed his epistles to individual churches. He did not place one over another. **This is an important principle.**

Please note the God given order for leadership in the first churches as set forth in Ephesians 4:11:

First, Apostles – Read Mark 3:14; Acts 2:14; Ephesians 3:1-6.

Second, Prophets – Read Acts 11:27-30; 13:1-3.

Third, Shepherds - Ephesians 4:11 (**translated ‘pastors’ in most versions**).

Forth, Teachers – Read Acts 13:1.

“But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased” (1 Cor. 12:18).

First Apostles

Note the way we can recognise true apostles from false:

First, Apostles, meaning ‘sent ones’. They were:

1. **Chosen and appointed** by the Lord – Mark 3:13-14
2. **Named ‘apostles’** by the Lord – Luke 6:12-16.
3. **Sent** by the Lord to bear **witness** to the Lord – John 15:26-27
4. **Present with Him** from the **baptism of John to His ascension** - Acts 1:21-22
5. They had **‘seen’** the Lord – 1 Corinthians 9:1
6. They were granted **signs and wonders** to authenticate their apostleship.

All the Apostles **had known and ‘seen’ the Lord**, except Paul, who **‘saw’** the Lord at his conversion (Acts Ch. 9).

No one today has ‘seen the Lord’ and can claim to be an ‘apostle’. The Bible says; *“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ”* (2 Corinthians 11:13).

The Apostles laid the foundations of the Church by **how they lived** (Acts 20:17-30); and by **what they taught** (1 Corinthians Chapter 3). What they taught is called the **apostles doctrine (or teaching)**: *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers”* (Acts 2:42); *“And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem”* (Acts 16:4). This is now recorded in our Bibles, the inspired word of God.

Laying Foundations

The **apostles and prophets** belonged to the **foundation period of the Church**. They were **taught by the Lord**, and after His ascension they **received revelations** from the Lord to complete the doctrines. (1 Corinthians 3:9-23; Ephesians 2:19-20).

They and their special gifts of miracles, healings and tongues are no longer with us, since we have the completed Scriptures.

Please note 1 Cor. 13: 8-13: That which is **‘perfect’** (Greek neuter gender) had come – the **‘perfect’** and **‘complete’** word of God. **‘Perfect’ is not a person, it is some ‘thing’**. The scriptures are the only **‘perfect’** ‘thing’ in the world today (**‘perfect’** means **‘complete’**). This is the **near view**; the **far view** will be when His **‘perfect’** kingdom is established on earth.

These gifts are not necessary today for the normal functioning of the local church. They were **temporary** in nature, used by God primarily for purposes of **confirmation** and **authentication** of the apostle’s message. They were strictly limited in use in 1 Corinthians Chapter 14. However, we do believe that miracles and healings do happen at times today in answer to prayer and as it pleases the Lord.

The apostles appointed elders in all the churches to carry on their work. Timothy and Titus were also instructed to see that elders were appointed in churches. Believers were to **recognise** and **esteem their elders highly** in love (1 Thess. 5:12-13). They were also to **submit** to them (1 Peter 5:5).

The apostles passed their baton to ‘elders’. We are instructed to appoint elders in the churches, but not apostles – Acts 14:23.

Second, Prophets

Prophecy came through gifted **prophets**. Prophecy is the **declaration** of what cannot be known by **natural means**. It contained warnings about **future events** and **revelation of doctrine**. Its purpose was to **edify** (build up), **exhort** (stir up) and **comfort** (to bind up) the believers - 1 Corinthians 14:1-3.

The prophets gave **inspired messages** from God in the churches **because the believers did not have Bibles**. Scrolls of the Old Testament books were rare, costly and bulky and few existed. The first books of the New Testament were not written for some years after Christ's resurrection and ascension. The book of Revelation written by John about AD96 completed the canon of Scripture. Nothing is to be added to the completed revelation in our Bibles (Revelation 22:18-19; Jude 3). **The Bible as we know it came much later.**

Today elders and teachers have taken the place of the apostles and prophets, and they are to edify, exhort and comfort as they gather from, and unfold the treasures in the completed scriptures.

Third, Shepherds who are the Elders

The word translated as 'pastor' in many Bibles should be 'shepherd'. The elders are the shepherds, and each church as it grows should have a number of **elders** who are also **teachers**. *"Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety"* (Proverbs 11:14). Please note that Paul called the **elders** of the church at Ephesus (not the Pastor, Minister or Bishop) to meet with him at Miletus (Acts 20:17; Philippians. 1:1). To these **elders** Paul said, *"Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to **shepherd** the church of God which He purchased with His own blood"* (Acts 20:28). The qualifications and service of Elders:

The word 'elder' describes one who is **spiritually mature**, and the **'work'** of elders is to **'oversee'** and to **'shepherd'** the flock. **These are 'doing' and 'caring' words and not names to be taken as badges of authority.** The Greek word for **'shepherd'** has been translated as **'pastor'** while the word **'overseer'** translated **'bishop'** in some old versions of the Bible.

These words are now used as **titles for church leaders**, but this has **no authority** to do so from the word of God. *"And He (Jesus) sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone "desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:35).*

Dignity and Duty

The word **'elder'** indicates the **dignity** of the office.

The words **'overseer'** and **'shepherd'** the **duties** of the office.

The **duties** of elders are to **'oversee'** and **'shepherd'** the flock.

To Oversee is the far view: The word **'oversee'** means to **'stand in a prominent place'** and **'oversee'** the flock', watching out for good pasture, water, and any danger from wild animals. **Elders** are to protect the flock from danger. This is the **'far view'** of caring for the sheep.

Shepherd, is the near view: The word **'shepherd'** means to **'feed the flock from God's Word with other acts of special care'**. It is the **'near view'** or caring for the flock. **Note:** Peter uses similar words in 1 Peter 5:1-5 to what Paul says in Acts 20:28. Note Psalm 23.

The word **'pastor'** is taken from Ephesians 4:11 and should be translated **'shepherd'**. The word 'Pastor' has been given a meaning beyond what the Bible teaches and often places a man **above** his fellow believers. The elders are 'shepherds' *"among the flock"* and lead by **example**. Please note what Peter wrote:

*"The **elders** who are **among you** I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: **Shepherd** the flock of God which is among you, serving as **overseers**, not by compulsion but willingly, not for **dishonest gain** but eagerly; nor as being **lords** over those entrusted to you, but being **examples** to the flock"* (1 Peter 5:1-3).

These words were never meant to be used as titles or badges of distinction. Jesus warned against this in Matthew 23:1-12, *"But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your **Teacher**, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your **father**; for One is your **Father**, He who is in heaven. And do not be called **teachers**; for One is your **Teacher**, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

Elders lead by example and not by force. In this way they gain the respect of the flock who are to esteem them highly in love for their works sake and submit to them (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:7, 17).

An elder is one who is spiritually mature, his gift and work is to teach, oversee and shepherd the flock.

The importance of a functioning oversight

Functioning:

The **ideal number** of elders **caring** for a local church is **three or more**. The Bible calls this the **'oversight'** (1 Timothy 3:1-2). Elders should meet regularly to wait on the Lord for direction in all matters concerning

the flock. One elder is not to rule over his fellow elders, but all to meet in humility thinking of others as better than themselves. The local church is a theocracy with the Lord as the head.

1. To have a biblical leadership, there must be spiritual people who know their Bible, and who are exercised to develop and use their gifts.
2. A dependence on any one man in leadership can; **a.** limit the development of gifts; **b.** limit church planting; **c.** exhaust available funds in meeting a Pastor's support.
3. A number of elders leads to sharing the load of caring for the flock entrusted to them. This also balances out personalities with their strengths and weaknesses. As elders wait on the Lord, His will can be prayerfully arrived at. *"Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety"* (Proverbs 11:14).

"For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25)

Financial support for elders

For the most part elders are **self-supporting**, except for those who *'labour in the word and doctrine'* – that is, those elders who give all their time to caring for and teaching the flock. These were *'counted worthy of double honour'* and were to be supported by gifts from the churches and believers (1 Timothy 5:17).

Deacons

The **deacons** (meaning 'servants') support the elders in the work of the local church. The qualifications for elders and deacons are found in 1 Timothy chapter 3 and Titus chapter 1. They must have a good testimony in the community and in the church, be of good behaviour, having only one wife. The wives of elders and deacons are to be godly women of discretion.

A deacon is one who supports the elders in the various activities of the local church.

Forth, Teachers

Today gifted teachers gather and glean from the Word of God. A gifted teacher waits on God as he meditates on the word of God. The Spirit of God can impress on his heart what scriptures to read and what to teach the flock. Teachers have replaced the prophets. Elders are also to be able to teach: *"An overseer (elder) then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behaviour, hospitable, **able to teach**; not given to wine, not violent, **not greedy for money**, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous"* (1 Timothy 3:2-3)

Transparency and Accountability

The Bible gives strong warning about money: *"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows"* (1 Tim 6:10).

Money can be a temptation to some to covet and misuse or even steal church funds. All offerings should be counted **by two or more elders or deacons**, and safely banked with **good accounting records kept and signed**. The elders and deacons also meet to decide what aspect of the Lord's work should be supported.

Great care should be taken with the offerings of the Lord's people, because it has been given to the Lord.

Paul wrote this about gifts given by churches to be delivered to the poor believers in Jerusalem: *"avoiding **this**: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us; **providing honourable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men**. And we have sent with them our brother whom we have often proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, because of the great confidence which we have in you"* (2 Cor. 8:20-22).

Elders and teachers should instruct church members about honesty in all aspects of their lives.

Chapter 5

Evangelism and Church Planting

Just before the Lord Jesus Christ went back to heaven, He commanded His disciples saying: *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them** to observe **all things***

that I have commanded you; and lo, I am **with you** always, even to the end of the age.” Amen (Mat 28:18-20).

Making Disciples

This is called the ‘**Great Commission**’. The book of Acts records that Peter, John, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, Paul and many others preached the Gospel, telling others about the Lord. Many were converted and new churches planted. This should be the pattern for us to follow today.

Making disciples means teaching the new believers the '**all things**' found in God's Word. A disciple is a '**disciplined one**' who learns to follow the Lord, and follows Him to learn.

A disciple has **conviction** about the true teaching of God's Word, and will not depart from it. A disciple has **commitment** to the Lord and His ways as revealed in God's word, and also has commitment to the local church and its activities.

Disciples must live sanctified lives

If the Lord is to use us, we must live sanctified lives. The word '**sanctified**' means '**set apart for God's use**'. Set apart from sin and serving self. Disciples should:

1. Make it a daily practice of **reading** and **meditating** on the word of God. This means taking time to think about each verse and applying it to your life.
2. Remember your **position** in Christ. *“For you **died**, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory”* (Colossians 3:3-4). When Christ died, you died in Him, then rose in Him. *“I have been **crucified with Christ**; it is no longer I who live, but **Christ lives in me**; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me”* (Galatians 2:20). *“For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin”* (Romans 6:5-6).

Walking in the light - Teaching this to the disciples

1. **What is your condition before Christ?** When you sin, read 1 John Chapter 1. *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). The blood of Jesus Christ God's Son **cleanses us** (keeps on cleansing us) from all sin. Once you confess any sin, get up from your knees and go on to serve God for He has forgiven and forgotten.
2. **All Christians sin at times.** We are not perfect. Do not let an **accusing conscience** trouble you, for you are forgiven. The devil wants to keep you down with you face in the mud with his foot on your neck! Ask the Lord for grace to walk humbly before Him and to overcome each temptation.
3. **Learn to walk by faith, not by feelings.** Walking in the light means there is no known sin between you and the Lord. *“If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”* (1 John 1:6-7). If you stand under a light, you cast no shadows. If we all walk **in Christ's light**, which is **walking in love and righteousness**, we have fellowship with Him and with each other. If we walk away from His light, we sin and lose our joy, and make problems for those around us and in our church.
4. **Learn to witness**

We need to learn how to witness to non-Christians and tell them about Jesus, and how He can save us from our sins. **Learn to tell how you became a Christian, for this is your testimony!** *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear”* (1 Peter 3:15).

We need to so know the Word so that we are *“holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict”* (Titus 1:9).

All Christians have a responsibility to live lives that commend the Gospel, and to look for opportunities to tell others about the salvation that is in our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is what the believers at Thessalonica did: *“For from you the word of the Lord sounded forth...”* They *“turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven”* (See 1 Thess. 1:8-10).

Teaching Baptism

The Lord Jesus commanded that the disciples were to be **baptised**. The word means to '**dip**' or '**immerse**' and much water is needed for this because in baptism we identify with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, and thus a new life (Romans Ch. 6). Baptism means to **totally immerse**. Sprinkling water on babies or older folk is not found in the Bible. (John 3:23; Acts 8:36-39),

As we read the book of Acts, we will see that **all believers** were baptised on their confession of faith: *“Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized? Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”* (Acts 8:36-37).

We are to baptise in the **one name** of the **Father, Son and Holy Spirit**. This teaches us the truth of the trinity. We read *‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth’* (Genesis 1:1). The trinity is latent in the word **‘God’** from the Hebrew **‘elohim’**. This word is a **uni-plural** word, again referring to this same truth. We see this again in these words: *“Then God said, “Let Us make man in **Our image**, according to **Our likeness**”* (Genesis 1:26). Jesus said, *“He who has seen me has seen the Father”*. We also see the trinity at the baptism of our Lord, for the **Spirit** descended on **Jesus, the Son**, in the form of a dove, and the **Fathers** voice was heard from heaven (Read Matthew 3:13-17).

Teaching them all things

We are to teach what the apostles taught the new converts, *“And they continued steadfastly in the **apostles’ doctrine** and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers”* (Acts 2:42). We teach disciples:

- a. To follow in the apostles teaching.
- b. In fellowship with other believers.
- c. In the keeping the Lord’s Supper.
- d. In gathering for prayer.

Church Planting

The Lord planned the church (Matthew Chapters 16 & 18). He wants His people to meet together each Lord’s Day (Sunday, the first day of the week) to carry out this teaching. When we lead people to Christ, we need to gather them together in the Lord’s name (Matthew 18:20), and instruct them in all the teachings contained in the Bible.

Remember, Jesus has said, *“...and lo, I am **with you** always, even to the end of the age.”* He will always be with you, and as you look to Him in prayer, He will open the way ahead for the path you are to follow.

May the Lord help you and bless you as you walk in the light of His word.

Chapter 6

The Coming of the Lord

The coming of our Lord for His people is one of the most wonderful events promised in the word of God. It will happen in a moment, and it will usher us into the glories of His presence. This is what we should be living for, and anticipating at any moment. It should fill us with zeal to serve Him faithfully.

We are to be: *“looking for the **blessed hope** and **glorious appearing** of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works”* (Titus 2:13-14).

We are to live for heaven: *“For our **citizenship is in heaven**, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will **transform** our lowly body that it may be conformed to **His glorious body**, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself”* (Philippians 3:20-21).

We shall then be like Him: *“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, **we shall be like Him**, for we shall see Him as He is”* (1 John 3:2)

He is coming for His people

This was taught by our Lord Jesus: *“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a*

place for you. *“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to My self; that where I am, there you may be also”* (John 14:1-3).

The apostle Paul also taught this: *“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by **the word of the Lord**, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means **precede** those who are asleep. For the Lord **Himself** will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the **dead** in Christ will rise first. Then **we** who are alive and remain shall be **caught up** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Also read 1 Corinthians Ch. 15. *“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed **in a moment**, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed”* (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

From this we learn that:

When Christians die, their body goes to dust, but their soul and spirit are immediately with the Lord enjoying His presence (2 Corinthians 5:8). When the Lord returns, the dead in Christ will rise first, and the living believers will be '**caught up**' or '**raptured**' together to meet Him **in the air**. When we see Him we shall be changed and shall be like Him and with Him forever.

He will judge His people.

After the '**rapture**' we go to the '**judgement seat of Christ**' for '**reviewing**' and '**rewarding**'. For we all must stand before our Lord, **not for our sins**, but for the **reviewing** of the deeds done in the body; that is for our service, motives and our attitudes, whether **good or bad**. Then He will **reward** His people, for there are **crowns** to be won if we have faithfully followed Him.

The Bible says: *“For we must all appear before the **judgment seat of Christ**, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad”* (Read 2 Corinthians 5:6-11).

This is not the judgement of our sins, for Christ paid that debt at Calvary. Jesus said: *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall **not come into judgment**, but has passed from death into life”* (John 5:24).

His people will then be prepared for the **rejoicing** at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-10). In view of this, the apostle Paul disciplined his body, lest he became '**disqualified**'. This means the loss of his **present testimony** and of **future reward** (Corinthians 9:24-27).

His coming with His people

The Lord then returns to earth **with** His people, to **judge** the world in righteousness and to bring in His kingdom on earth (Revelation 19:11-21, Chapter 20). At that time **His feet will touch down on the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem**. For the repentance of Israel and the earth shaking events of that Day, read Zechariah Chapters 12 to 14.

This terrible 'Day of the Lord' is referred to in many scriptures (Read Joel 2:31-32), *“because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead”* (Acts 17:31).

When He comes for His people, we meet Him in the air.

When He comes with His people, His feet stands on the Mount of Olives at Jerusalem.

A Review of these events:

The Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples about His coming **for them in the air** (John 14:1-3). Each time we partake of the Lord's Supper, *“you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes”* (1 Corinthians 11:26). The Church should be waiting for the Lord Jesus to return at any moment (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10) after which the great tribulation runs for seven years, called the time of Jacob's or Israel's trouble. See Jeremiah Ch.30; Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew Ch. 24; Rev. 7:13-14). Believers will be in heaven at the judgement seat of Christ. Then the Lord returns **with His saints to earth** in great power and glory and establishes His 1000 year (Millennium) reign. The resurrection and judgment of the wicked follows, and then the eternal state (Read Revelation Chapters 19 to 22).

Our Lord Jesus also taught His disciples to use the gifts He had given them, and to *“Do business till I come”* (Luke 19:13). A number of His parables taught the disciples to be ready for His appearing at any moment.

Let us be busy serving the Lord, meeting with His people and waiting for His coming.

Copies and translations of this book are encouraged.
But the Editor ask that no changes be made to the text.

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