

What the Bible Says About...

STRUCTURE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

I- FIRST- THE CHURCH WAS IN GOD'S ETERNAL PLAN (It was not, and is not, designed by man).

A. It was prophesied in the Old Testament

- [Daniel 2:31-45](#)- 4 "kingdoms" prophesied in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream (which Daniel interpreted):
 - Babylonia - gold - (629-540 BC)
 - Persia - silver - (539-330 BC)
 - Greece - brass - ((330-67 BC)
 - Rome - iron - (67BC - 476 AD)
- [Daniel 2:44](#)- *"In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom..."*
 - This "kingdom", we will see, will be **the church**.

B. When Jesus came, he taught that this kingdom was very near (immediate future):

- [Matthew 4:17, 23](#); [Mark 1:15](#); [Luke 4:43](#) - *"the time is at hand; the kingdom is near."*

C. All of these prophesies were fulfilled on [the Jewish feast of] Pentecost in AD 33 - [Acts 2](#)

- From this time on, it will be spoken of in the **present tense**. ("It is here.")
 - [Hebrews 12:28](#)- *"...we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken..."*
 - [Revelation 1:6](#)- *"...[He] has made us to be a kingdom and priests..."*
- Therefore, the church is no accident, not man-made and it is not unimportant.
 - [Acts 20:28](#) speaks of *"...God's church which he bought with his own blood."*

Word "church" means "called out"

- Greeks used this word to refer to "an assembly."
- The Holy Spirit chose this word to provide us a picture of what the church is to be:
 - "A group of people whom God has called out of this world (and sin) to be "His own people."
- We become one of God's own people when our faith leads us to respond to the gospel message.
- [Acts 2:37-47](#)- church is comprised of all baptized believers who are walking by faith.

II- GOD HAS REVEALED HOW HIS CHURCH IS TO BE ORGANIZED

- "The church is not an organization; but there must be organization in the church."
 - **Every Christian** has been given the responsibility to be a minister according to his individual talents.
- There is an established order in the church: - [Titus 1:5](#)
- Each congregation is full and complete in itself. No regional, state, national or world governing body

A. FIRST & FOREMOST- CHRIST IS THE ONLY HEAD

- [Ephesians 1:22-23](#) - *"And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."*
- [Ephesians 5:23](#) - *"For the husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church..."*

This is why the church is not an "organization"; it has no earthly head.

- It is a **body**- with Christ as its HEAD - [Ephesians 5:23](#)
- It is a **kingdom**- with Christ as its KING - [I Timothy 1:17](#)
- It is a **bride**- with Christ as its BRIDEGROOM - [Matthew 9:15](#)

- There are positions of responsibility ordained for each congregation of Christ's church- ALL ARE POSITIONS OF SERVICE!

B. ELDERS

- There are three words used in the New Testament to denote this position:

1. elder (gr. "presbuteros") - "older man" (regarding age and/or experience)

2. pastor (gr. "poimen") - "a shepherd"

3. bishop (gr. "episkopos") - "an overseer"

- These terms are used interchangeably - [Acts 20:17;28](#); [I Peter 5:1-4](#); [Titus 1:5-7](#)

- The **terminology** suggests age, experience, spiritual maturity, respectability, concern, and example of life.

- The **qualifications** are listed in [I Timothy 3:1-7](#); [Titus 1:6-9](#)

- Their **responsibilities to the congregation** are summarized in [Acts 20:28](#)

C. DEACONS

- The word "deacon" (gr. "diakonos") was a very common word to denote "a servant."

- Used in reference to whoever renders service of any king and is used in many different ways in the New Testament:

- domestic servants - [Jn. 2:5, 9](#)

- civil ruler - [Romans 13:4](#)

- Christ himself - [Romans 13:4](#)

- followers of Christ - [John 12:26](#)

- disciples' relationship to each other - [Matthew 16:1](#)

- sister (Phoebe) who served church in Cenchrea - [Romans 16:1](#)

- Apart from such common usage (very much like "church"), the Holy Spirit chose this word to designate a specific function/office in the church:

- The **qualifications** are listed in [I Timothy 3:8-13](#)

- Their **function** is to serve the church in whatever capacity they have been appointed.

D. EVANGELISTS & TEACHERS

1. "Evangelist" (gr "euangelistes") - literally means "a messenger of good"

- **qualifications**- [I & II Timothy, Titus](#)

(cf. [I Timothy 4:13](#); [5:22](#); [II Timothy 2:15ff](#); [I Timothy 6:11](#); [II Timothy 4:1-5](#))

- Other New Testament designations:

- "preacher" - [Romans 10:14](#) - "minister" - [I Timothy 4:7](#) (same word as "deacon")

- **function:**

- spread gospel either through traveling or locating - [Acts 8:40](#); [Acts 21:8](#)

- strengthen the faith of those already converted - [I Timothy 4:6](#); [Titus 1:3](#); [2:1-5](#)

- refute error - [I Timothy 1:3](#)

- organize churches - [Titus 1:5](#)

- engage in public ministry of the word - [I Timothy 4:13](#)

- This is a specific function in the church - [II Timothy 4:5](#) - "...do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry."

2. "Teachers"

- The work of a teacher is everywhere and inherent to the nature of Christianity.

- It is a specific function that is recognized in the New Testament.

- [Acts 13:1](#); [I Corinthians 12:28ff](#); [Ephesians 4:11](#), etc.

- The **qualifications** are obvious:

- Mature Christian who studies and learns and is willing to teach others.

- [II Timothy 2:2](#)- *"The things that you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others."*

CONCL.

A. It is our deepest desire to submit to God's plan for His church.

- Such a church provides an environment that will attract those who are lost and encourage each of us to develop our talents so that God will be glorified.