

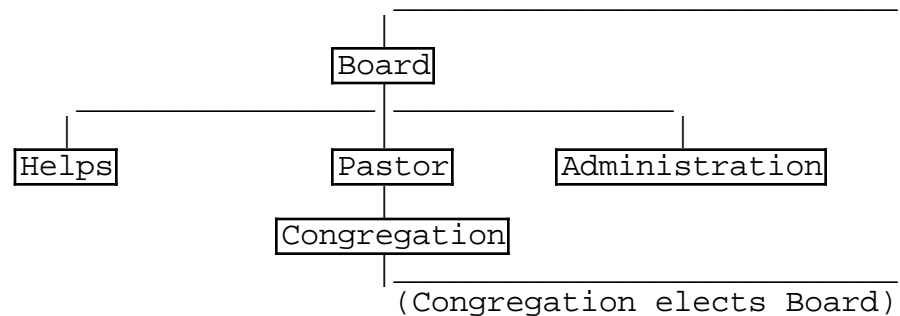
The Leadership of the New Testament Church

Today's church leadership consists mainly of the Board (elected by the members), and the Pastor (chosen by the board or by the members). The Board answers to the members of the church; the members of the church answer to the Pastor; the Pastor answers to the Board.

Everyone answers to someone else and we have a circle. Everyone is elected. And we end up with a democracy which satisfies the governments for a religious organization that is tax exempt; and it satisfies the world which loves to see democracy in action.

But is this compatible with the new testament church that is given to us in the Bible? Does God support a democracy?

Let's look at the church leadership as we find in most evangelical churches today.



Here we can clearly see the circle that I was referring to above. It is a democracy circle.

But God has not given us a democratic church in the Bible. He has always had a theocratic type of government--that is, the Lord Jesus Himself rules His church. Clearly democracy in the church cannot be compatible with scripture, but rather, we are using modern thinking to set out the leadership in the church today.

But what is the leadership in the new testament church?

In order to understand the references to foundations which we find in the following passage we need to understand how they made a foundation for a building in those

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days. They did not use concrete and steel as we do. Instead they built the foundation using blocks of stone. The most perfectly squared stone was the cornerstone. From there the rest of the foundation stones were aligned to it, making a straight stone foundation upon which the building was erected.

To find the scriptural church foundation we need to look at Ephesians:

19 So then you are no longer stranger and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,

20 having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,

21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; Ephesians 2:19-21

We see that Christ Jesus is the cornerstone, and the apostles and prophets that **He appoints** are the rest of the foundation. Therefore, if a church does not accept the apostle and prophet, they are clearly eliminating most of their own foundation. How can such a church stand? Clearly it cannot!

We need to understand that the apostle and prophet have not been eliminated from the new testament church. But they have been eliminated from most churches today! This is a very grievous error. If we eliminate such offices from the church, we can no longer build this church in God's Biblical order!

Once we have realized that the foundation is made up of Jesus Christ as the cornerstone and the rest of the foundation as the apostles and prophets, we can look at the rest of the leadership for the church which we find in the Bible.

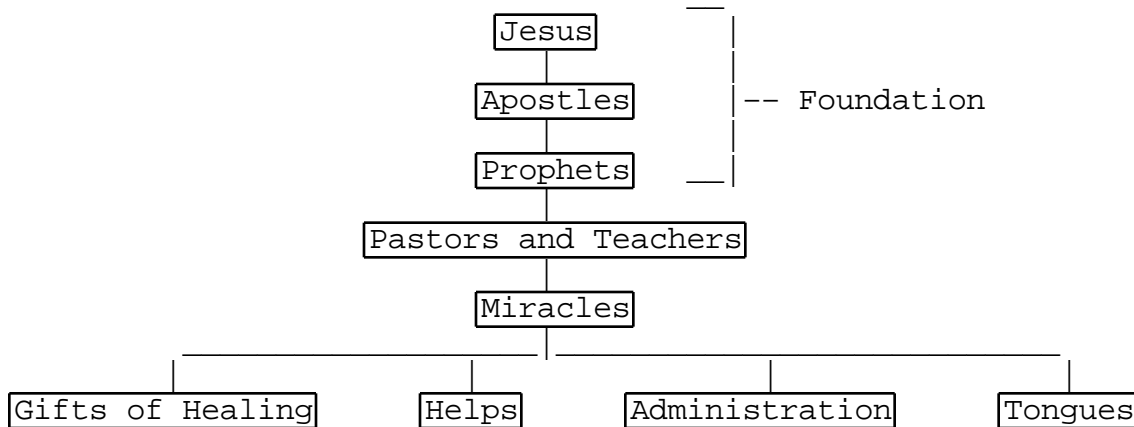
28 And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. I Corinthians 12:28

11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, Ephesians 4:11

It should be pointed out that pastors and teachers are put together. The reason for this is that a pastor, in Biblical terms, is a shepherd and teacher of the congregation.

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If we put all of this into a chart it will look like this:



Here we find the true church leadership which starts with Jesus, and continues with those whom He has appointed within the church. In the quote from Ephesians above we see that Jesus appoints people to these areas; they are not elected or chosen by men.

You will notice that in I Corinthians 12:28 that Gifts of Healing, Helps, Administration, and Tongues, are put together into one level.

However, we would be seriously in error if we took the above chart and made man in charge. Man cannot and must not be in charge of the church.

In any position that God chooses to place a man whether apostle, prophet, pastor, teacher, or whatever, that man must submit to the leading of the Lord. It must be the Lord who is in charge through the man. Any man that God calls must be in submission to the Father.

Then as the Lord works through the ones who He appoints, the church will be lead by Him above. It is important to realize that every person should submit to the Holy Spirit's leading, and therefore, each and everyone will be working together as the Lord directs.

This is the true church that God has ordained to be in total submission to Him. I personally do not know of any church that follows it. But if we wish to have a church that truly submits to the Lord Jesus Christ, instead of to each other, we will have to conform to this model of submission which we find in the Bible!

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Now let us look at the leadership of the local church. This has always been assumed to be the pastor. However, there is no scripture for this. Indeed, the word pastor only appears once in the entire new testament in Ephesians chapter 4. The pastor is a shepherd, teaching and guiding the sheep. He is never referred to as a leader of the local assembly.

As we look at the scriptures we will find that the apostles appointed, as the Holy Spirit directed, elders who are the leadership of the local body.

21 And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch,

22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they believed.

24 And they passed through Pisidia and came into Pamphylia. Acts 14:21-24

Here we see that Paul and Barnabus were setting up elders in the churches before they moved on to other cities. The elders were left in charge of the local church.

5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you,

6 namely, if any man be above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion.

7 For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain,

8 but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled,

9 holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. Titus

1:5-9

Here Paul leaves Titus in charge to set up elders in every city. Starting in verse 6 we see the requirements that must be met for one to be an elder. These are strict requirements that always must be met.

1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,

2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising over-sight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

3 not yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. I Peter 5:1-5

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Here Peter exhorts the elders not to exercise power, but in humility to the Lord, lead and shepherd the flock. Humility and living as an example is the only way to truly shepherd the flock. Exercising power is never allowed by those in the leadership of the church.

17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. I Timothy 5:17

Elders are the main, but not the only, preachers and teachers of the congregation.

16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus in order that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.

18 And when they had come to him, he said to them,

“You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time,

19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews;

20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house,

21 solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

22 “And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there,

23 except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.

24 “But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

25 “And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will see my face no more.

26 “Therefore I testify to you this day, that I am innocent of the blood of all men.

27 “For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.

28 “Be on guard for yourselves and for 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.

29 “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

31 “therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

32 “And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

33 “I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothes.

34 “You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me.

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35 “In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” Acts 20:16-35

Here Paul needed to talk to the leadership of the local church. He therefore called together the elders of the church.

27 Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.

28 And one of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius.

29 and in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.

30 And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabus and Saul to the elders. Acts 11:27-30

Here again we see that when sending to the church they sent it to the elders who were obviously the leadership of that church.

14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; James 5:14

When the leadership of a church was to pray and anoint a person it was the elders that did so.

1 And some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”

2 And when Paul and Barnabus had great dissention and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabus and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

3 Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren.

4 And when they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them.

5 But certain ones of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed, stood up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.”

6 And the apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. Acts 15:1-6

19 “Therefore, it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles,

20 but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.

21 “For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose

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men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabus--Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, Acts 15:19-22

Whenever there was a question of doctrine it was to the apostles and the elders of the church that the question was given. They then took this before the Lord and reported back what He answered.

The elders were clearly the leadership within the local assembly. They were the main preachers and teachers, guiding the local church in all things.

I think it is clear that the four fold ministry (also called the five fold ministry--see chapter 9) was part of the congregation, preached or taught from time to time, but were themselves just part of the local church.

They continued in whatever work God gave them to do, and would submit to the elders of the local church, and of course, to the apostles within the Body of Christ.

(For the purpose of this book I am referring to this as the four fold ministry, as opposed to the five fold ministry. The reason for this is that some [including me] combine pastors and teachers under one heading.)

We need, therefore, to examine scripture to find the role of each of the four fold ministries as they did their part within the church body. We understand that each one of them must submit to the Lord and His direction in their lives.

19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,
20 having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,
21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; Ephesians 2:19-21

The very foundation of the church is Jesus, and with Him the apostles and prophets. This shows the importance of these two parts of the four fold ministries.

11 And he gave some as apostles, some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,
12 for the quipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;
13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ.
Ephesians 4:11-13

Let us look at each of the callings within the four fold ministry to see what scripture says about their individual roles.

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Apostles

- 1 And some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."
- 2 And when Paul and Barnabus had great dissention and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabus and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.
- 3 Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren.
- 4 And when they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them.
- 5 But certain ones of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed, stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."
- 6 And the apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.
- 7 And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.
- 8 "And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to the, giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us;
- 9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.
- 10 "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?
- 11 "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are." Acts 15:1-11

The apostles are the highest calling among men (see chapter 7). It is their place to call upon God and to follow Him in all the questions of doctrine and the direction of the church.

Prophets

- 27 Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.
- 28 And one of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius. Acts 11-27-28

- 3 But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. I Corinthians 14:3

A prophet receives words, dreams, or visions from the Lord concerning future events for edification (to build up), exhortation (to give warnings), and consolation.

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Evangelists

8 And on the next day we departed and came to Caesarea; and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. Acts 21:8

26 But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Arise and go south to the road that descend from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.)

27 And he arose and went; and behold, there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship.

28 And he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah.

29 And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot."

30 And when Philip had run up, he heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

31 And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Acts 8:26-31

Here is an example of an evangelist. Philip is called to preach and teach the word outside of the church. The church is evangelized—they have already received Christ. Evangelists go to the world to show them the way of the gospel. They go wherever sinners are found.

Pastors and Teachers

35 But Paul and Barnabus stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching, with many others also, the word of the Lord. Acts 15:35

Paul and Barnabus, along with many others, preached and taught the Word of God to the people. This is the call of the teacher within the church. Pastor means to shepherd or guide the people. This includes teaching, but is not limited to it.

So we see that the four fold ministry is within the church, each doing their part for the Lord as He directs them. The Word clearly places the apostles and the elders as the leadership, with the elders—which are chosen by the Lord—as the ones who direct the local assembly.

We also see from the scriptures that each one must operate in humility and obedience to the Holy Spirit. In this way there will be unity within the various callings.