

## Church Offices

- In the New Testament, there were specific offices (and therefore officers) appointed in and for the church.
  - Apostles; Prophets; Pastors; Deacons (possibly deaconesses). Evangelist might be an office as well.
  - Four our purposes, we will consider Apostles, Pastors/Elders/Overseers, and Deacons.
  - We will look at qualifications and functions.
- So first, we will deal with apostles.
- What are the qualifications?
  - They had to be directly called by Jesus, and they had to be present in His ministry from the outset to the end of it. Specifically, they had to be eyewitnesses of His resurrection. So from the time of John the Baptist to the resurrection was the time frame.



## Apostles

- What was their function (or ministries)?
  - They were church planters. They formed the foundation of the church as church planters. Christ is the cornerstone, and they are the foundation.
  - God stamped His approval of them laying this foundation with signs and wonders and miracles.
  - Some of them also engaged in the writing of Scripture.
- Although those in the charismatic movement disagree, the office of apostleship has ceased.
  - This leaves us with two offices in the church: elder and deacon.



# Apostles

- Cessation of the office of apostle.
- As eyewitness of the ministry and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as planters of the first churches, as workers of signs and wonders and miraculous deeds, as recipients of peculiar authority to be exercised in the earliest churches, and as writers of Scripture, the apostles constitute the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20).
  - Clearly, the office of apostleship was unique and temporary, divinely designed to be formative for the early church and then to cease with the death of the last apostle.
  - Who today has witnessed the resurrection of Christ and is inspired to write Scripture?
- Certainly, no person today can meet the stated requirements for apostleship—being with Jesus from the outset of his three-year ministry and an eyewitness of his resurrection—so no person today can be qualified biblically for the office.



# Apostles

- Cessation of the office of apostle (continued).
- Any so-called modern apostles could only serve non-apostolic purposes:
  - they could not testify about Jesus—other than by what they read in Scripture;
  - they could not establish and strengthen the first churches after Pentecost;
  - they could not set new and different patterns of conduct to be observed “in all the churches” without violating the sufficiency of Scripture;
  - they could not write Scripture.
  - This does have implications for the cessationist/continuationist debate.
- So what apostolic purpose could they serve?
  - None.
  - However, we cannot categorically rule out the gift of apostleship, but that is different from the office. God might be equipping pioneer missionaries with the gift sets of the apostles, but to call them apostles would create a great deal of confusion.
  - There were 12 Apostles of Jesus Christ, and then a few others. That was it.
  - No great leader in the Christian Church has ever used the term apostle in reference to themselves. This is far different than the people who do it today.

## Elders/ Pastors

- This is the eldership or pastorate.
  - This is one of the two remaining offices: Pastorate and diaconate.
- The New Testament uses several words to refer to this office.
  - επισκοπος (*episkopos*): bishop, overseer
  - πρεσβυτερος (*presbuteros*): elder, presbyter
  - ποιμην (*poimēn*): pastor (the common English word to refer to this office)
- The New Testament uses the first two words more but all three are used and all three are used interchangeably.
  - Bishop and Elder used interchangeably in Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Tim. 3:1, 2; 1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:5, 7; (early church usage)
  - Interchangeability of pastor with these other two is less direct, but still present (1 Pet 5:1-2; Eph 4:11; Acts 20:28)



## Scriptures for Interchangeability

- Acts 20:17, 28 – Now from Miletus, he sent to Ephesus and summoned the elders of the church...<sup>28</sup> Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood.
- 1 Timothy 3:1-2 – This saying is trustworthy: "If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble work."<sup>2</sup> An overseer, therefore, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, self-controlled, sensible, respectable, hospitable, able to teach
- 1 Timothy 5:17 – The elders who are good leaders are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.
- Titus 1:5-7 – The reason I left you in Crete was to set right what was left undone and, as I directed you, to appoint elders in every town.<sup>6</sup> An elder must be blameless: the husband of one wife, with faithful children who are not accused of wildness or rebellion.<sup>7</sup> As an overseer of God's household, he must be blameless: not arrogant, not hot-tempered, not an excessive drinker, not a bully, not greedy for money,
- 1 Peter 5:1-2 – I exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder and witness to the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory about to be revealed:<sup>2</sup> Shepherd God's flock among you, not overseeing out of compulsion but willingly, as God would have you; not out of greed for money but eagerly;

## Elders/ Pastors Qualifications

- 1 Timothy 3:1-7.
  - This saying is trustworthy: "If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble work."<sup>2</sup> An overseer, therefore, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, self-controlled, sensible, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,<sup>3</sup> not an excessive drinker, not a bully but gentle, not quarrelsome, not greedy.<sup>4</sup> He must manage his own household competently and have his children under control with all dignity.<sup>5</sup> (If anyone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of God's church?)<sup>6</sup> He must not be a new convert, or he might become conceited and incur the same condemnation as the devil.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, he must have a good reputation among outsiders, so that he does not fall into disgrace and the devil's trap.
- Titus 1:5-9
  - The reason I left you in Crete was to set right what was left undone and, as I directed you, to appoint elders in every town.<sup>6</sup> An elder must be blameless: the husband of one wife, with faithful children who are not accused of wildness or rebellion.<sup>7</sup> As an overseer of God's household, he must be blameless: not arrogant, not hot-tempered, not an excessive drinker, not a bully, not greedy for money,<sup>8</sup> but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, righteous, holy, self-controlled,<sup>9</sup> holding to the faithful message as taught, so that he will be able both to encourage with sound teaching and to refute those who contradict it.

## Elders/ Pastors Qualifications

- We will take each qualification in order.
- First, the man must strongly desire it or aspire to it.
  - This runs counter to what happens often where churches say if someone wants the office, it points out arrogance and pride. That is not what Paul says.
  - Some people think it must be like a reluctant prophet.
  - One of my roles as a pastor is to have regular conversations with men in the church who already act in a pastoral way (lead, teach, pray, engage in mission, etc.) and I should ask if they feel the Holy Spirit is leading them towards being a pastor. So in conversations with other elders, I could recommend the person as an intern if they have the aspiration.
- Next, he must be above reproach.
  - This expression is probably an umbrella expression that is fleshed out with the list below. Paul explicates what above reproach looks like.



## Elders/ Pastors Qualifications

- Next, he is to be the husband of one wife.
  - There is a lot of debate about this. Does it refer to a prohibition of polygamy? Or divorce? Or singleness?
  - Polygamy is probably not in mind, though it would still be captured by these words.
  - Is this a mandate that an elder must be married? Paul speaks too favorably about those who are celibate. For Paul, that was very important. So he would not mandate marriage.
  - Is it a prohibition against divorce? Meaning, if a candidate for elder is currently divorced or was divorced in the past and now remarried, is he not qualified for the office?
  - Paul would have talked about it in a very different way if his point was divorce. Divorce does not necessarily disqualify a man from being considered for the office of elder or pastor. What if the divorce was when he was a non-believer? What if it was legitimate divorce when he was a believer? Bigger picture, this is not what Paul is getting at. What Paul is prohibiting against marital unfaithfulness. He must be faithful to his wife. He must be a one woman man. He is faithful to her and eschewing inappropriate relationships with all other women.
  - This also is not a prohibition of a widower from getting remarried and becoming an elder.

## Elders/ Pastors Qualifications

- Sober-minded.
  - This simply refers to being serious about the things of God. You take the spiritual war seriously. You think about things biblically.
- Self-Controlled.
  - We have to factor in cultural realities. This is not stoicism. There can be emotion. Some cultures are very expressive. It's about keeping oneself under disciplined self-control.
- Hospitable.
  - This is a competency. This is not a personality trait. It is not telling you to be an extrovert. You must have the heart to open your heart to strangers and be a welcoming person. Introverts can still open their heart and home to other people.
- Respectable.
  - Self-explanatory. Someone who lives unworthy of respect is not qualified.

