

Presbyterianism

Scriptural Foundation – “Elder Rule”

- I. Revealed, not Instituted
 - A. Exodus 3:15,16 – “Elders” – Hebrew – “bearded ones” – confirmed Moses’ credentials to the people – civil authority
 - B. Exodus 12:3,21 – Elders were to oversee Passover – religious authority
- II. Old Testament
 - A. Israel in Wilderness
 1. Abrahamic Covenant (ecclesiastic) given in context of Moses’ writing of the Pentateuch
 - a. Reminds Israelites – “you are a church”
 - b. Explains structure of leadership
 2. Wilderness leadership
 - a. Moses – Prophet
 - b. Aaron & sons – Priests
 - c. Elders – representative of the people – 70 instituted in Numbers 11:16,17
 - i. Drawn from pool of those who were already representing the people
 - ii. Connected to religious function – v.17 “I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it upon them”
 - B. Israel in Promised Land
 1. Appeals came to both priests and elders – Deut. 17:9-12
 2. Elders sat with Elisha – 2 Kings 6:32
 3. Elders met with God’s prophet beside the river Chebur – Ezek. 8:1
 4. Priests and elders formed the court that condemned Jesus – Matthew 26:57-59
- III. New Testament Church
 - A. Acts 15 – apostles and elders formed initial leadership of the Christian church
 - B. Office of deacon explicitly added – Acts 6 (? – word not used, but function same as job description in 1 Timothy 3)
 - C. Generational transition – from Apostolic Era to Elder Rule
 1. 1 Timothy 3
 - a. 1-7 – Elders & their qualifications
 - b. 8-13 – Deacons & their qualifications
 2. Titus 1:5-9 - Elders
 3. **Note** – duties are assumed – both passages focus on qualifications.
 - a. Titus shifts from title “presbuteros” (translated “elder”) to function “episcopos” (“overseer”) in v.7

IV. Summary

- A. Scripture reveals offices in the church (both Old and New Testament), some of which have ceased, and some of which continue
1. Prophet – proclaims God’s word with God’s authority. Office ceased with the closing of the New Testament revelation. (1 Cor. 13:8-10; Hebrews 1:1,2)
 2. Priest – stands between God and the people – intermediary – particularly in the function of atoning for sin. Office culminates in Jesus Christ and is taken up with him into heaven where He still intercedes for his people (Hebrews 10:11-14; 1 Timothy 2:5).
 3. Apostles – those who were eyewitnesses to the resurrected Christ and were commissioned by him to speak in his name. “apostolos” = “sent ones”
 - a. Held on same level as Old Testament prophets – Ephesians 2:20
 - b. Israel and New Testament church perfectly united in Revelation 21:12-14 – 12 tribes & 12 apostles
 4. Elders – 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1 – continuation of Old Testament role, and seems to be subdivided into Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders (1 Timothy 5:17)
 5. Deacons – 1 Timothy 3, Acts 6 (?) – no direct Old Testament parallel. Function seems to be a leadership role in entire church’s obligation to care for widow/orphan