

Lecture 4: The Church: Who Governs the Thing, and How?

1. Recap: what is church? Work of ascended Christ; not human organization.
 - a. ∴ Christ appoints office bearers, cf Ephesians 4:7f, 11 ∴ Acts 9:15; 2 Corinthians 5:14; Acts 20:28
 - b. Which offices? Cf Ephesians 4:11
 - i. Apostles = eyewitnesses, cf Acts 1:22. Sent out by Christ Himself ∴ preached, established churches. Their authority covered all churches ∴ wrote letters relevant for all. Not replaced.
 - ii. Prophets
 1. General: cf Num 11:29; Acts 2:17 ∴ Acts 8:4; 11:19f; 1 Corinthians 14:39; Lord's Day 12
 2. Special: cf Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc; Acts 21:10; 2 Peter 1:21 – completion of Scripture, no prophets left, ie, no new heavenly message
 - iii. Evangelists, cf Acts 21:8; 2 Tim 4:5 → term: pass on good news. Nothing else known. Nowhere an instruction to continue this office.
 - iv. Pastors & Teachers, cf Acts 20:28 = elders (≠only ministers), cf 1 Peter 5:1,2. This office to remain, cf 14:23; Titus 1:5.
 1. Two subgroups: cf 1 Tim 5:17 → elders + minister
 - c. Scope: church is catholic, yet local. Elders/pastors given to church in each town, cf Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5. Cf principle of Gen 1:26ff: each person a ruler, cf Ps 8:6f ∴ no person absolute ruler ∴ Ex 18:21; Dt 16:18. Decentralization! Authority is local.
 - d. Task of offices:
 - i. Elders: Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1ff → shepherd, cf John 10:14-16* → consider Jesus' example! See Mark 6:34. ∴ elders: feed, care, protect ∴ Titus 1:9 – focus is vertical
 1. NOTE: to do this need to *know sheep, ie, get in homes!!* Don't leave this task to minister → to teach/preach. Elders take sermons to homes....
 2. Warning of Ezekiel 34:1-10; Hebrews 13:17b
 - ii. Minister: preach/teach, cf 1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 4:2; Titus 2:1,15; 3:8 → recall 3:4ff. Ie, speak from God to people
 1. Cf 1 Thessalonians 2:13: ie, ensure your sermon in line with Scripture, ie, use confessions. Not speak from own experiences! Nor distracted, cf Titus 3:9
 - a. Note: church → assembly of believers = God's people by covenant ∴ faith to be built up – Rom 10:17
 2. ∴ insist on solid, well-researched, contemporary proclamation of Jesus Christ!
 - a. ∴ Theological College, cf 2 Tim 2:2
 3. Not administrator or counsellor! Elders to take sermons into homes.
 - iii. Deacons: Acts 6:1ff ∴ Philippians 1:1 – focus is horizontal.

1. Note: focus isn't money, cf Acts 6:1c. ∴ 1 Corinthians 12:12ff → activate communion of saints to be the one body Christ made them to be. Striking deacons mentioned in Phil 1:1 → emphasis of letter is self-emptying service, cf 2:3ff
- e. Attitude of office bearers vital
- i. Church is *Lord's* work. ∴ office bearers to follow Lord's example, not follow human principles; cf Mt 20:28. ∴ *not* Mt 20:20ff. Cf 1 Sam 12:3; Acts 20:33-35; 1 Peter 5:2ff.
 - ii. So: fruit of Spirit obvious in manner of work, cf Galatians 5:18ff. No selfishness; *serve* as Lord did!
 1. So office bearers demonstrate their conviction church is Lord's work, not man's.
 - iii. Given all under Christ, equality, ie, no hierarchy amongst office bearers. See Mt 20:20ff; 23:8ff. Becoming office bearer is no way to enrich self! Cf Deuteronomy 17:14ff. Recall: church is Lord's work!
- f. Who becomes office bearers??
- i. Genesis 1:26ff – each created with responsibility. Though Christ rules, uses people as “fellow-workers”, cf 1 Corinthians 3:9; 2 Corinthians 6:1; cf 2 Corinthians 5:20. Takes certain men for special office.
 1. Privilege to be fellow-worker ∴ 1 Tim 3:1. So: prepare!! Ensure have qualities of 1 Tim 3 & Titus 1, ie, “faithful men”. Here parents' task, esp mothers, cf 1 Tim 2:15. Think further than today!
 - ii. Office of all believers: Acts 2:17f; Titus 2:2f
 1. Older men – 2:2 → believe 2:11 ∴ 2:12f, ie, aware model gospel, teach it...
 - a. Gen 1:26ff → train next generation how to image God
 - b. Gen 2:15,18 → man is leader, cf 3:9 ∴ 5:1ff; 12:1;
 - i. ∴ instruct, cf Gen 18:19; Ex 10:2 (Moses is 80+); Dt 4:9 (men present, cf 5:21) ∴ Ps 71:18 → 92:14f (not teach only own children!)
 - c. Faith lives into old age. Share your experiences, wisdom ∴ older men model, teach. Not to pasture!
 - i. Younger: *receive!* Respect, cf Lev 19:32
 2. Older women – 2:3 → believe 2:11 ∴ 2:12 ∴ self-emptying
 - a. Recall Gen 1:26ff ∴ insist on godly attitudes, ie, fruit of Spirit vs works of flesh.
 - b. Get into homes of younger – whom Titus/elders can't rightly teach..., cf 2:4f. Model gospel through lifestyle
 - i. Younger: *receive!* Respect, cf Lev 19:32
 3. Older folk an under-utilized resource!! We overwork office bearers, perhaps run out of eligible men, because too many who received HSp sit on sideline....
2. Scripture insists be office bearers who rule under Christ. ∴ Q: how become office bearers? Recall: church not human organization, but Christ's work. So: how *He* call brothers to office??
- a. OT: directly called by God, cf Ex 3:2,10; 28:1; 1 Sam 10:1; 16:13; Jeremiah 1:4ff.

- i. ∴ Jesus: Hebrews 5:4ff
 - ii. Jesus appointed apostles directly: Mark 3:13ff
 - b. Pentecost: ascended Lord calls indirectly, ie, involves congregation
 - i. Vaguely → lot: Acts 1:24-26
 - ii. Clearly after outpouring of Holy Spirit: Acts 6:3ff; 14:23. See also 1 Tim 4:14 → body of elders is local group; Tim minister in Ephesus, cf 1 Tim 1:3
 - 1. Note: *congregation* involved, office bearers *not* imposed on congregation by any outside group. No individual/team has right to ordain...
 - 2. Lord gives criteria congregation to follow, ie, 1 Tim 3; Titus 1
 - a. No elbows/campaigning, eg, simony, cf Acts 8:18f
 - 3. Note: this not make office bearers responsible to congregation! Cf Hebrews 13:17; not democracy. Yet office bearers not to ignore congregation either, for Holy Spirit poured out on all, cf Acts 2:17f.
 - c. Reaction – since church is Christ’s work, office bearer His fellow-worker/servant
 - i. From appointed brother: do work with humility and confidence, cf 2 Tim 1:6f
 - 1. Determined to speak from Christ alone, ie, speak from Bible!
 - ii. From congregation: receive readily cf 1 Thessalonians 5:12f; 1 Tim 5:17; Hebrews 13:17
 - 1. Attitude at home visit.
- 3. Need to go beyond local congregation. As do, recall: *Not a human organization!**
 - a. Trend today: independent churches, ie, unaffiliated with a federation
 - i. Distance self from wrongs of past in public perception
 - ii. Fits spirit of times: each makes/holds own truth, not accountable to others - individualism
 - b. Ascended Christ rules through elders. Great power to these men, cf Mt 16:18f; John 20:22f. More: 1 Thessalonians 5:12f; Hebrews 13:17. ∴ easy to abuse people!
 - i. Cf Ezekiel 34:1ff; Mt 9:36
 - ii. ∴ imperative there be a way to protect sheep of God’s flock from abusive office bearers. What is ‘order’ Christ our Master commanded?? ∴ to Scripture.
- 4. What find? Churches to be autonomous, but *never independent* – for one Head, recall catholicity....
 - a. After Pentecost, one church = communion of believers, cf Acts 2:41ff; 4:4,32ff; ∴ 5:11 = singular
 - b. Development: 8:1, ie, scattered, cf 9:31; 11:19(?)
 - c. No single, regional church: church → “churches”
 - i. Cf (Acts 9:31); Galatians 1:13, 22; Acts 11:26; 14:23; 15:41; 16:4f; 1 Corinthians 12:27. Think local! Cf OT theme of decentralization, Deuteronomy 16:18
 - ii. Jurisdiction of apostles was universal, but of elders is local, cf Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5. ∴ mind own business, ie, each church *autonomous*

- d. Yet not mean each church is island to self, ie, independent so as to ignore other churches.
 - i. Doctrine (cf Art 27): ie, church is one, catholic.... ∴ practical application
 - 1. Cf Judges 5:12ff; Proverbs 11:14; 15:22. People finite in wisdom, also depraved, selfish, and power hungry. ∴ Lord gives us each other.
 - 2. Genesis 4:9; Leviticus 19:17 → Ps 141:5 → Galatians 2:11
 - ii. Mutual interest, Acts 11:22;
 - 1. Care, Acts 11:29f; 2 Corinthians 8:1-4; 9:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 4:9f
 - 2. Letters, Romans 16:1f; Acts 18:27
 - 3. Greetings, Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 John 13
- 5. This combination of oneness and interest led early church to develop formal church life, eg, synods. Ie, to recognize each other as *Lord's* churches, ie, form federation, churches meet together to encourage, admonish, cooperate, advise, cf Prov 11:14; 15:22. Such meetings (classes/synods) is necessary consequence of God's revelation. *No independentism*. Help each other, seek advice from....
- 6. Historical development of church government:
 - a. Roman Catholicism – elder is elevated and lost in favour of one elder = pope, bishops
 - b. Lutheranism – elder is servant of king
 - c. Reformed – elder is Christ's servant
 - i. Calvin – Geneva
 - ii. Netherlands
 - 1. Convent of Wezel, 1568. Principles:
 - a. No lording, cf Mt 23:8, ∴ Art 74
 - b. Need for ecclesiastical assemblies, cf vanWingen
 - 2. Synod of Emden, 1571 – Germany (persecution). Adopted *Belgic Confession*, yet saw need for Church Order, ie, need each other!
 - a. Adoption of *Belgic Confession* → also Art 32a
 - b. Development of Church Order, cf Art 76
 - 3. Synod of Dort, 1618/19
 - a. Canadian Reformed CO
 - d. Congregational – elder is servant of congregation.
 - e. Collegial – ecclesiastical democracy
- 7. Point: Belgic Confession shows way church to go today wrt government. Ie: *power of elder is curtailed by his being accountable to fellow elders. Ibid: power of church is curtailed by being accountable to sister churches. So wronged member has course of appeal*. Herein lies care/protection of Jesus Christ.