

## Elders; Numbers 11:16-17

- I. Corporations
  - a. In the last 50 years or many have come to view the church much like a business entity
    - i. There are hours of operation (Sundays and weekdays)
    - ii. Some (Insurance companies) view our services as a product, and our offering as an income
    - iii. We spend hours looking at our 'bottom line'
  - b. For us to gather the correct understanding of Elders, we must have the Biblical understanding of the church
    - i. The biblical view of the church is that of a family or a body
    - ii. Romans 12:4–5 (ESV) <sup>4</sup> For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
    - iii. Matthew 12:46–50 (ESV) <sup>46</sup> While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. <sup>48</sup> But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" <sup>49</sup> And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! <sup>50</sup> For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."
  - c. We must stop thinking like Americans in a capitalist society and start thinking like Christians in the church
- II. In The Gates
  - a. God gathered Elders for His people to serve under (with) Moses
    - i. Numbers 11:16–17 (ESV) <sup>16</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, "Gather for me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them, and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you. <sup>17</sup> And I will come down and talk with you there. And I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you may not bear it yourself alone.
    - ii. Notice that God gave them the same Spirit that He gave Moses
    - iii. These Elders bore (shared) the burden of governing the people with Moses
    - iv. Israel was a Theocracy "(government of a state by immediate divine guidance or by officials who are regarded as divinely guided<sup>1</sup>)"
    - v. This Hebrew word means leader as well as an older person; the context makes it easy to determine the meaning
  - b. Elders were leaders of cities
    - i. Joshua 20:4 (ESV) <sup>4</sup> He shall flee to one of these cities and shall stand at the entrance of the gate of the city and explain his case to the elders of that city.

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<sup>1</sup> Inc Merriam-Webster, [\*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary\*](#). (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

Then they shall take him into the city and give him a place, and he shall remain with them.

- ii. Proverbs 31:23 (ESV) <sup>23</sup> Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land.
- iii. God used Elders to watch over the people both physically and spiritually (remember, this is a Theocracy)
- c. Just as the Elders of the Old Covenant were tasked with watching of the Israel, so are the Elders of the New Covenant

### III. In The Church

- a. The church is not a Theocracy although the Elders have been chosen by the Spirit
- b. Acts 20:28 (ESV) <sup>28</sup> Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to **care** for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.
- c. 'Care' is the Greek word for Shepherd (it is only translated as 'care' in this verse)
  - i. There are three Greek words used for Elders
    - 1. Shepherd (tend, care, rule, feed)
    - 2. Overseer
    - 3. Elder (context determines if the writer is talking about an older person or an Elder)
  - ii. 'Pastor' is a Latin word for 'herdsmen' or 'to feed', the same idea as 'shepherd'
  - iii. Acts 20:17 (ESV) <sup>17</sup> Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.
  - iv. Paul called for the 'Elders' of Ephesus (Acts 20:17) and calls them 'overseers' and 'shepherds' (cares) in Acts 20:28
- d. God uses three different terms to describe those He chose to lead His people
- e. Shepherd
  - i. To serve as tender of sheep, *herd, tend, (lead to) pasture*; to watch out for other people, in the sense of lead, guide, or rule <sup>2</sup>
  - ii. Matthew 9:36 (ESV) <sup>36</sup> When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.
  - iii. John 10:11 (ESV) <sup>11</sup> I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.
  - iv. John 21:16 (ESV) <sup>16</sup> He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep."
  - v. 1 Peter 5:1–5 (ESV) <sup>1</sup> So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: <sup>2</sup> shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; <sup>3</sup> not domineering over those in your

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<sup>2</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 842.

charge, but being examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup> And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. <sup>5</sup> Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

- vi. We have a responsibility to be the sheep
  - vii. Hebrews 13:17 (ESV) <sup>17</sup> Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.
- f. Overseer
- i. “One who has the responsibility of safeguarding or seeing to it that something is done in the correct way, *guardian*
  - ii. In the Greco-Roman world, it frequently refers to one who has a definite function or fixed office of guardianship and related activity within a group
  - iii. The term was taken over in Christian communities in reference to one who served as *overseer* or *supervisor*, with a special interest in guarding the apostolic tradition” <sup>3</sup>
- g. Elder
- i. An official, *elder*, *presbyter*
  - ii. Among the Jews (the congregation of a synagogue in Jerusalem used I to denote its officers before 70 AD
    - 1. for members of local councils in individual cities
    - 2. for members of a group in the Sanhedrin
  - iii. Among the Christians, in connection with associations of the ‘old ones’ and to designate civic as well as religious officials
- IV. Elder
- a. A religious official (elder) who is responsible for safeguarding the Gospel (overseer) and caring for the members of the body (shepherd)
  - b. You can see how far away this is from a corporation or board of trustees
  - c. The church is a family, and the Elders are the parents who care for the children
  - d. Next week we will look at the Characteristics that God wants in His shepherds

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<sup>3</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 379.