

# Thesis on Church and Ministry

1. The church was established by Jesus Christ and is recognized as being present wherever confession is made. As the church is established by Jesus Himself, it endures forever (Mt. 16:18).
2. In the New Testament the word church, *ἐκκλησία*, can have other meanings besides all those who have been redeemed and have believed in Jesus for salvation. The word church is used in the following ways:
  - a) Church can mean individual gatherings of Christians in a group. "The church in your house" (Philemon 2).
  - b) Church can refer to what we understand today as a church service. "Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind." 1 Cor 14:19. "Let each of them keep silence in the church" (1 Cor 14:28).
  - c) Church can refer to the wider fellowship or association that Christians have in a larger geographical area as a nation or province. "So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up" (Acts 9:31).
3. The pastoral office was established by Jesus and was held by the prophets before Him, Himself, the apostles, and pastors today.
  - a) The task of shepherding God's people is one that He assumes for Himself in the Old Testament (Ez 34:11), is assigned to religious leaders in Israel (Ez 34:2), and is assigned to the Messiah (Ez 34:24; Zech 11:4).
  - b) Jesus specifically assumes to Himself the pastoral office. "I am the good shepherd" (Jn 10:11). "I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered" (Mt 26:31).
  - c) The apostles were also entrusted with this pastoral office by Jesus. Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Feed my lambs ... Tend my sheep ... Feed my sheep" (Jn 21:15-17).
  - d) The apostles understood that this pastoral office was shared by others. "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians, to feed the church of the Lord which he obtained with his own blood." (Acts 20:28). "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 to be revealed. Tend the flock that is your charge ..." (1 Pt 5:1-2).
4. The New Testament uses a constellation of nouns and verbs which apply to the pastoral office and to its responsibilities or tasks. The words applying to the pastoral office include *πρεσβύτερος*, *ἐπίσκοπος*, *ποιμήν*, and *διδάσκαλος*. *Ἐργάτης* may also be used. The verbs relating

to the pastoral office *ἐπισκοπεῖν, ποιμαίνειν, διδάσκειν*. These words in their appropriate contexts refer specifically to the pastoral office.

5. Excursus: 1 Pt 5:1-5 provides significant material on the Apostle's understanding of the pastoral office. Peter understands himself as *συμπρεσβύτερος*, a fellow clergyman, along with *πρεσβυτέρους*, other clergymen (v. 1). He reserves for himself the unique apostolic function of being a legal witness of the passion of Jesus, *μάρτυς τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθημάτων* (v. 1). These clergymen are given the pastoral responsibility of caring for the flock, *ποιμάνετε τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν ποίμνιον τοῦ θεοῦ*, by Peter (v. 2) in a way virtually identical in which Jesus shared this responsibility with Peter, *ποίμαινε τὰ πρόβατά μου* (Jn 21:16). Cf. Acts 20:28 where St. Paul calls the church the flock *ποίμνιον* and the pastoral responsibility is called *ποιμαίνειν*. Peter and Paul use identical vocabulary in assigning the pastoral responsibilities to others. Jesus is identified by Peter as the chief pastor, *ἀρχιποίμενος* (v. 4).
6. πρεσβύτερος. This term is regularly used of both the apostles and pastors, the clergy in general. It may be used by an apostle of himself, 1 Pt 5:1 *συμπρεσβύτερος*, 2 Jn 1 and 3 Jn 1, *πρεσβύτερος*. There seems to be no indication that others used these terms in speaking of the apostles, as it would be more appropriate to address them by their more unique title of *ἀπόστολος*. These self-designations do however indicate that they do consider themselves *πρεσβύτεροι*. There is no indication that Jesus used this term of Himself. In the book of Acts, the *πρεσβύτεροι* appear with the apostles as a recognizable group to whom certain responsibilities are ascribed. This is obviously the case in Acts 15 where the phrase *οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι* appears four times (vv. 2, 4, 22, 23). This group is the one before whom the problem is presented and in whose midst it is resolved. Certain terminology suggests that they were functioning as early as Acts 11:1. This group is not limited to Jerusalem as they were appointed by Paul and Barnabas in Asia Minor (Acts 14:23). Also in Ephesus they were an established group distinct from the congregation and given certain pastoral responsibilities over the church (Acts 20:17-30; esp. v. 28). As a group they participated in the ordination of Timothy (1 Tm 4:14 *πρεσβυτερίου*). Titus is given instructions to appoint *πρεσβυτέρους* for the various towns of Crete (Titus 1:5). (This word is not easily translated into English not because of any inadequacy in the Greek language, but because of the impoverishment of the English. The word elder in the English tongue suggests a gifted or prominent layman. Beck translates the word with *pastor*. This is perhaps better than *elder*, but pastor should ordinarily be related to the Greek word *ποιμήν*.) The early church may have taken over certain features of the Sanhedrin which is called in Mt 28: 12 *τῶν πρεσβυτέρων σθημβούλιον*. The word used of the New Testament clergy including the apostles seems to suggest their ruling or administrative functions.
7. ἐπίσκοπος. The term *ἐπίσκοπος* or its cognates is applied Jesus, the apostles, and others, namely pastors. Acts 20:28 seems to suggest that the term is interchangeable with *πρεσβύτερος*. The *ἐπισκόποι* are said to be appointed by the Holy Ghost. Acts 20:28 brings

together three important words in describing the pastoral office. In addition to *ἐπίσκοπος* and *πρεσβύτερος*, the verb *ποιμαίνειν* is used to indicate function of shepherding or pastoring. The *επισκόποι* are also mentioned as a group as being the recipients of the epistle to the Philippians (1:1). While not used of Jesus in the Gospels, it is used by Peter of Jesus *τὸν ποιμένα καὶ ἐπίσκοπον* (1 Pt 2:25). Its cognate *ἐπισκοπή* refers to an office which is to be desired according to St. Paul (1 Tm 3: 1). The office which Judas forsook when he took his own life is also called by Peter as an *ἐπισκοπή* (Acts 1:20). The tasks suggested by the terms *ἐπίσκοπος* and *ποιμήν* seem to overlap. *Ἐπίσκοπος* does not necessarily suggest the self-sacrificing attitude of the pastor for the sheep or church as does *ποιμήν*. The responsibilities of the office of the *ἐπισκοπή* and those eligible for it are found in 1 Tm 3:1-6. The context indicates that Timothy himself held the office of the *ἐπίσκοπος*, "For if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for the church of God?" (v. 5). "I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and the bulwark of the truth" (v. 14).

Excursus: At this point it becomes impossible to detail all the responsibilities given by Paul to Timothy. After all this is the purpose of writing the entire epistle! Here are a few:

1. A statement of faith which is to be preserved (3:16).
  2. Handling those teaching false doctrines (4:1-10).
  3. Conduct of the public services, including preaching (4:11-16).
  4. Handling personal relationships within the church, including charity (5:1-16).
  5. Supervision of the *πρεσβύτεροι* including salaries, charges of false doctrine handled in an indiscriminatory way, and ordination.
  6. Drinking wine when the job becomes pressing (5:23).
  7. Instructions for slaves (6:1-2).
  8. Handling those teaching false doctrine (6:3-10).
  9. Personal adherence to the confession (6:11-16).
8. *ποιμήν*. The term *ποιμήν* is most eminently used of Jesus Himself. Jesus regarded Himself as *ποιμήν* and even though the responsibilities of this office were specifically transferred by Jesus to His apostles (Jn 21: 15-17) and were later held by others who were not apostles (Acts 20:28; 1 Pt 5:1, 2), Jesus continued to hold this office in the church even after His ascension (Hb 13:20 *τὸν ποιμένα τῶν προβάτων τὸν μέγαν*; 1 Pt 2:25; esp. 1 Pt 5:4 *ἀρχιποίμην*). The only

place where the office is used of others is Eph 4:11. Here one office may be designated by two titles *τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους*.

Excursus: It is striking that the apostles while taking to themselves or were referred to in some way by *πρεσβύτερος*, *ἐπίσκοπος*, and *διδάσκαλος*, but do not refer to themselves or are designated by others as *ποιμήν*. It can only be conjectured that in the presence of the Chief Shepherd, that they were hesitant to assume this title and thus take the place of Jesus. It is clear however that they possessed and exercised this function. Cf. Mt 9:36-10:4. "The crowds ... were ... like sheep without a shepherd ... Pray ... the Lord ... to send out laborers into the harvest ... And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority ..." *Ποιμήν* and its cognate *ποιμαίνειν* suggests the individual care of souls.

9. διδάσκαλος. This title *διδάσκαλος* and its cognate *διδάσκειν* is used of Jesus, the apostles, and pastors. Rather than referring to what we know in our society as those who show expertise in education whether it be at the lowest elementary level or the highest graduate level, the New Testament is consistent in using this word and its cognates as referring to those who are recognized as qualified to exposit Christian doctrine because they are thoroughly grounded in it over a longer period of time. The *διδάσκαλος* is a person recognized as qualified to convey, *διδάσκειν*, the total body of doctrine, *διδασχὴ*.
  - a) *διδασχὴ* is used with remarkable consistency (*of corpus doctrinae*) in the Gospels (Mt 7:8) of Jesus, of the apostles (Acts 2:42), of the standard of fellowship (Rm 16:17; 2 Jn 9, 10).
  - b) The conveying of the *διδασχὴ* is called the *διδάσκειν*. Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:2) and He envisions that others will also hold this task (5:19). The one exercising the *διδάσκειν* puts himself in special eschatological danger if he should err (Mt 5:19; Jas 3:1). The apostles are specifically entrusted with the preservation of the teaching of Jesus, which of course they did in the New Testament (Mt 28:20 *διδάσκοντες αὐτοὺς τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν*). The teaching of Jesus qualifies as command and all that teaching is recognized as authentic which is conveyed to the apostles by Jesus. The concept of preservation without addition or subtraction already taught in Mt 5:19 is reinforced by *τηρεῖν*.
  - c) *διδάσκαλος* is the title by which Jesus and also John the Baptist are addressed, especially by those who do not know him or are His enemies. Jesus does however take the title to Himself in Mt 23:8 *εἷς γὰρ ἐστὶν ὑμῶν ὁ διδάσκαλος*.

The title is used also by St. Paul of himself. 1 Tm 2:7 he calls himself the teacher of the Gentiles and 2 Tm 1:11 he calls himself an apostle and a teacher.

It is an office that is also held by others after the apostles. In Eph 4:11 it is placed with the word *ποιμήν* as one office. *ἔδωκεν ... τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους*. (It is also the office

which may only be held by men [1 Tm 2:12].) Paul sees this office as held by himself, then Timothy, and then others trained and selected by Timothy (1 Tm 2:1, 2).

To the Faculty  
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