

Presenting the Study Sheet:

“What Was the Organization Of the Church of Christ?”

The study sheet “What Was the Organization of the Church of Christ?” can logically follow the “Church” study sheet (Lesson 5). If the student is about ready to obey the gospel, one might decide to study the “Destiny” study sheet (Lesson 8) before studying the “Organization” study sheet.

Purpose

The purpose of the “Organization” sheet is to study the organization of the church as it was organized by Jesus and the apostles so that we can understand how the followers of Jesus should be organized.

Lesson in Brief

This study sheet shows that Jesus, the head of the church, is the only legislator for the church. The apostles, as special representatives of Jesus, were to relay the laws of Jesus to others, so that they could know Jesus’ word. The elders were to lead the congregation in following this word. Deacons and evangelists were to assist the elders, and the congregation was to follow the leaders in carrying out the will of Jesus.

Introduction

[This lesson can be introduced by briefly talking about the fact that organization is important in order to be effective and efficient. Jesus arranged for the organization of His church. As followers of Jesus we should seek to follow His plans of organization.]

Churches today are organized many different ways. Usually these churches have a strong central government that writes creedal statements and in some cases dictate to local congregations and control some of their internal affairs. Was this what Jesus planned for His church?

I. The Offices

In this lesson, when we talk about offices, we are not talking about authority so much as we are talking about responsibilities. In some cases authority is inherent in the office, but not in all cases; however, responsibilities are included in all offices.

1. When we studied the “Church” study sheet (Lesson 5), we learned that the church was under the authority of Jesus. What is Jesus to the church? [Read Eph. 5:23.] *What* is He to the church? [Fill in the blank with “head.”]

2. Before a building is built, the foundation is laid. The foundation *remains* under the building, and the rest of the building is placed on the foundation. Who are in the foundation of the church? [Read Eph. 2:20.] In this figure Jesus is pictured as the cornerstone of the foundation. Once the cornerstone is laid, the rest of the building is structured in relationship to the cornerstone. *Who* are the foundation? [Fill in the blanks with “apostles” and “prophets.”] The prophets spoken of in this passage are not Old Testament prophets but are rather New Testament prophets.

This does not contradict what we learned in the “Church” study sheet (Lesson 5). In that lesson we learned that Jesus is the *only* foundation (1 Cor. 3:11). In that figure the apostles are the ones laying the foundation and they themselves are built on it. In this figure Jesus is the chief rock, the cornerstone, within the foundation. Everything in the church is lined up with Jesus, including the apostles, on whom the church must be built because they have stood in the place of Jesus as His representatives ever since He returned to heaven. We will discuss their role in the church later.

3. What offices does Paul list when writing to the church in Ephesus? [Read Eph. 4:11.] *What* are the offices? [Fill in the blanks with “apostles,” “prophets,” “evangelists,” “pastors,” and “teach-

ers.”] In the next section we will study the responsibilities of each of these offices.

What have we learned in this section? We have learned that the church had various offices that functioned under the authority of Jesus, the head of the church.

II. The Purpose of the Offices

These offices were not placed in the church for the glorification of those who served in them. What were those in the offices to accomplish? [Read Eph. 4:12, 13.] *Why* were these offices established? [Fill in the blanks with “perfecting of the saints,” “work of the ministry,” “edifying of the body.”] Notice that these are service responsibilities. Those who were in these offices were to work toward the maturing of the members of the church, to help them grow toward their example, the stature of Jesus.

What have we learned in this section? We have learned that those who served in the various capacities within the church were to work toward the building up and maturing of the church.

III. The Responsibilities

Those who served in the various offices within the church had functions to perform that would be helpful for the growth and service of the church.

1. Every organization must have guidelines. Who has determined the rules and regulations the church is to follow? [Read James 4:12 and Acts 3:23, 24.] In His office as head of the church, *what* is Jesus? [Fill in the blank with “lawgiver.”] How many lawgivers does the church have? The church has only *one* lawgiver. He will destroy all who do not respond to His laws.

[*On the back* draw a box at the top of the page and write “Jesus” in it. See page 6.]

2. The apostles had no legislative authority, no right to make laws, rules, and regulations. What was their responsibility? [Read Matt. 28:20.] *What* were they to teach the church to do? [Fill in the blank with “observe.”] They had no authority to bind rules on people. Their responsibility was to teach people to obey the things Jesus had instructed them to teach.

3. Jesus used various people through whom to reveal His teaching after He had ascended to the Father. To whom did He reveal His teaching? [Read Eph. 3:3-5.] To *whom* did He reveal it? [Fill in the blanks with “apostles” and “prophets.”]

4. Through the Holy Spirit Jesus revealed all truth to the apostles. When they spoke, they were

relaying the things of Jesus to those who heard them (John 16:13-15). If we obey what the apostles taught, we, therefore, are obeying Jesus. The church is said to have continued in whose teaching? [Read Acts 2:42.] In *whose* teaching did they continue? [Fill in the blank with “apostles’.”] The apostles had received their teaching from Jesus, so it follows that by continuing in the teaching of the apostles, they were continuing in the teaching of Jesus.

[*On the back* draw a box under “Jesus” and in it write “Apostles and Prophets.” Then draw under the “Apostles and Prophets” a number of individual boxes. See page 6.] The churches were responsible to the apostles and prophets because Jesus gave His teachings through them.

5. The leaders in the local congregations had no authority to make laws for the church. Their responsibility was that of leading the congregations in carrying out the instructions of Jesus. These were known as elders, who were to do what? [Read 1 Pet. 5:1, 2.] *What* were they to do for the flock? [Fill in the blank with “feed.”] The Greek word from which “feed” is translated is *poimaino* which can be translated “pastor” or “shepherd.” The elders were to shepherd the flock. *What* else were the elders to do? [Fill in the blank with “oversight.”]

6. Paul gave instruction to the leaders of the church in Ephesus. What are they called? [Read Acts 20:17.] *What* word is used when referring to the leaders of the church? [Fill in the blank with “elders.”] *What* were they told to do? [Read Acts 20:28.] *What two things* were they to do? [Fill in the blanks with “feed” and “overseers.”]

The three terms used in reference to the leaders of the congregations were not titles but rather descriptions of the leaders in their offices. The term “elders” implied that they were to be selected from among men who were mature in the faith, not new Christians. Community leaders were commonly called “elders.” The term “feed” (from the Greek word *poimaino*) is a word that means “shepherd” or “pastor” in the sense of one who tends or takes care of a flock of sheep. The term “overseer” also “bishop” (from the Greek word *episkopos*) means to direct the affairs of a congregation. These are *not* three different offices, but instead are three different terms describing the same office. [*On the back* in the top of each of the empty squares under “Apostles and Prophets” write “Elders.” See page 6.]

These were the men who were the pastors, overseers of the congregation of which they were mem-

bers. They had no human headquarters, but instead were under the apostles and prophets, who in turn were under Christ. They had no authority to make laws for the congregation that served under them. They were leaders not legislators.

These were not “*the preacher*” or “*the pastor*.” The leadership of a congregation was in the hands of the elders, also known as bishops (overseers) and pastors (shepherds).

7. Serving under the direction of the elders were those who helped spread the teaching of Jesus, the evangelists. What instruction did Paul give to them? [Read 2 Tim. 4:2, 5.] *What* was the work of an evangelist? [Fill in the blank with “preach.” *On the back* in the squares write “Evangelists.” See page 6.] The evangelists were to preach *the word*. Christians had only *one* word, message, to preach, and that was the message Jesus gave through the apostles and prophets. They were not given the right to make up rules and laws for the church. The message they were to present was to be the message that had originated with Jesus.

8. Also serving under the direction of the elders were the teachers. What were they to do? [Read 2 Tim. 2:2.] *What* was the responsibility of the teachers? [Fill in the blank with “teach.” *On the back* in the squares write “Teachers.” See page 6.] They were to teach the things that had been learned from the apostles, in this case, the apostle Paul. Paul had received his message from Jesus through the Holy Spirit (Eph. 3:3-5). Teachers were not to make up regulations for others but instead were to teach others the message Jesus had given to the apostles and prophets.

9. Also in the church were others who had no leadership responsibilities. Who were they? [Read 1 Tim. 3:8.] *What* were they called? [Fill in the blank with “deacons.” *On the back* in the squares write “Deacons.” See page 6.] The Greek word from which deacon is transliterated is *diakonos*. This word means to serve or minister. These men were given no oversight capacity, but instead were responsible men the elders could rely on to do well what they were asked to do in handling needed services in the congregation.

10. Women were very important in the congregations. They served along with some of the greatest workers in the church (Phil. 4:3). There were some few restrictions placed on women. What did Paul write concerning the role of women? [Read 1 Cor. 14:34, 35; 1 Tim. 2:10-12.] *What* restrictions were

placed on women? [Fill in the blank with “silent.”]

Every Christian has restrictions, and all do not serve in the same capacity (1 Cor. 12:28, 29). Only a few men could serve as appointed leaders, and not all were evangelists, or deacons, or teachers. Women can serve in every capacity as can men with *only two* restrictions: They are not to take the leadership role in the assemblies or to be appointed leaders in the congregations. Because of their association with the children in the homes, women can have as much influence on the church through the children as the men can have. Through the bearing and the rearing of the children (1 Tim. 2:15) she can be glorified and be saved in her role as a woman, a role not available to men.

11. Members were to be guided by those who knew the instructions handed down through the apostles and prophets. How were they to respond to the leaders in the congregation? [Read Heb. 13:17.] *How* were they to respond to those who were over them? [Fill in the blank with “obey.” *On the back* write in the square “Members.” See page 6.] The leaders were to direct the members into the life and worship taught by Jesus. The congregation was to respond readily to its leaders as they sought to give it spiritual guidance.

What have we learned in this section? We have learned when the church is properly organized, Jesus is head over all the church. Through the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, Jesus gave all the instructions necessary for the church to follow. The offices of Jesus, apostles, and prophets are permanent offices in the church, which have no successors, i.e., no one is to replace them. The only true apostles and prophets the church has ever had are those who served in the period shortly after Jesus ascended back to heaven, through whom the new covenant was given. The church is to look back to them to learn the will of Jesus, which once and for all has been delivered (Jude 3). The church of Christ is that group of people who is seeking to do the work Jesus has assigned it to do in the organized fashion arranged by Jesus.

IV. Number of Leaders

1. Earlier in the lesson we learned that the elders are those who are to be the leaders in the congregations. Did each congregation have *one* elder (pastor, bishop) or a *number* of elders? [Read Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5.] *Was only one* elder chosen for each congregation, or were more than one chosen? [Fill

in the blank with “elders.”] The fact that *elders* were chosen implies that the congregations had more than one elder.

2. The book of Acts mentions the churches after they had been organized. Are the congregations described as having just *one* elder? [Read Acts 15:2; 20:17; Phil. 1:1.] *Did* the congregations have an elder or elders? [Fill in the blank with “elders.”]

What have we learned in this section? We have learned that the congregations of the Lord did not practice one man rule. One man did not oversee the affairs of the congregations. Each congregation had two or more appointed leaders, which is evident from the fact that “the elder” (one elder) of a congregation is never mentioned, but instead reference is always made to “the elders” of a congregation.

V. Qualifications

Could just anyone serve in the various offices of the church, or were qualifications required? [Read the Scriptures under numbers 1 through 5: Acts 1:21, 22; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Tim. 3:8-13; 2 Tim. 2:24, 25; 1 Pet. 4:11.] Each time *examine* the Scriptures. Did the restrictions and qualifications have to be respected before one could serve in any of the various offices? [Fill in *each* blank with “yes.”] [The purpose of this section is not to discuss at length the qualifications of each office. This could be done at another time. The purpose is to help the learner see that not just any Christian could be assigned these responsibilities.]

What have we learned in this section? We have learned that those who were assigned various responsibilities in the congregations had to qualify before they were to be assigned those responsibilities.

Summary

One thing that should have stood out in this lesson is the fact that *sole* authority in the church rests with Jesus. He is the head of the church, the one who

has organized and instructed the church concerning the way it is to function.

I. *What offices were in the church of Christ?* Jesus is the head. Serving under Him are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

II. *What was the purpose of these offices?* The purpose of these offices was to build up and mature the church so that it could render maximum service to Jesus.

III. *What were the responsibilities of these offices?* Jesus is the only lawgiver. Through the apostles and prophets He has given instructions for the church to follow. Every congregation is to look to them in this capacity.

The local congregations are to be led by the elders who have evangelists, teachers, deacons, women, and members they can direct into service of Jesus. The elders help coordinate the functions of the congregation and work for the spiritual welfare of the members (Heb. 13:17).

Each member has his role in the congregation of which he is a member. All do not serve in the same capacity.

IV. *How many overseers (elders, bishops, pastors) were in each church?* Each congregation was led by more than one leader. Every congregation had its own elders, its own overseers, i.e., bishops and pastors, and were not led and controlled by a central human headquarters.

V. *Did one have to meet certain qualifications before he could serve in these offices?* Those who were assigned responsibilities in the congregations were to be qualified before they were to serve.

Scriptures clearly teach that the right of authority over the church belongs to Jesus. No other has that right. Jesus’ followers are to “observe all” that *Jesus* commanded (Matt. 28:20), not the teachings and commandments of men.

In the next lesson we will study what Jesus wants used in worship.

[Arrange another study time with the learner.]

WHAT WAS THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST?

I. What offices were in the church of Christ?

1. Jesus is the _____ of the church. Eph. 5:25
2. In the foundation are _____ and _____. Eph. 2:20
3. He gave some to be _____ , _____ , _____ , _____ , and _____. Eph. 4:11

II. The purpose of these offices was the _____ , _____ , _____ . Eph. 4:12, 13

III. What were the responsibilities of these offices?

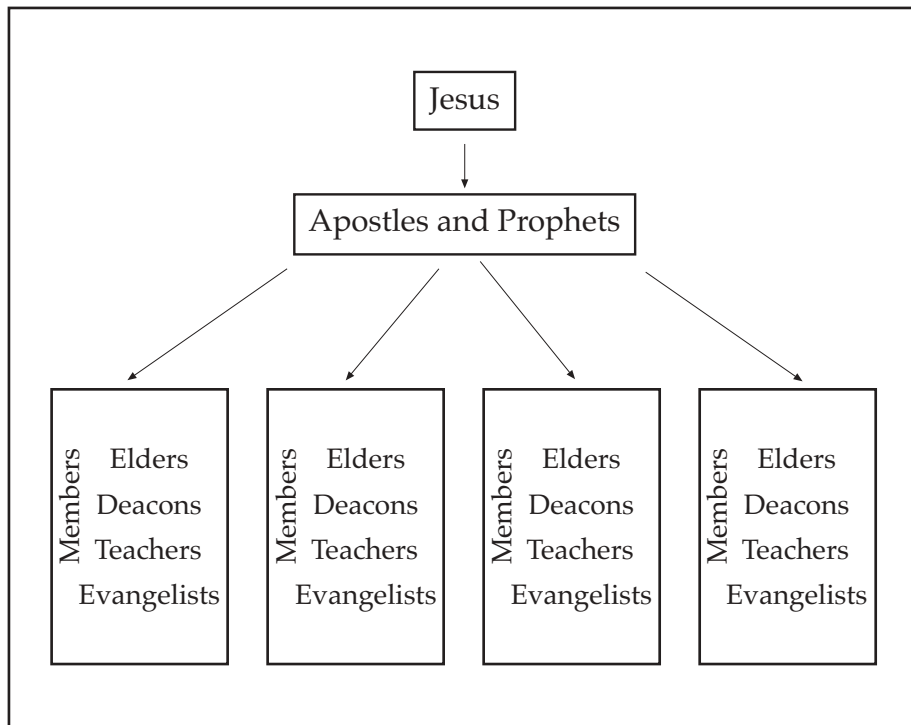
1. Jesus is the _____. James 4:12; Acts 3:23, 24
2. The apostles were to teach people to _____ Jesus' teaching. Matt. 28:20
3. Teaching was revealed to the _____ and _____. Eph. 3:3-5
4. The church continued in the _____ doctrine. Acts 2:42
5. The elders are to _____ (Greek, *poimaino*, pastor, shepherd) the flock of God, taking the _____ of it. 1 Pet. 5:1, 2
6. Paul called the _____ (Acts 20:17) telling them that they were to _____ (*poimaino*) the church over which they were made _____ (*episkopos*, bishops). Acts 20:28
7. Evangelists were to _____ the word. 2 Tim. 4:2, 5
8. Teachers were to _____ others. 2 Tim. 2:2
9. The church had _____ (*diakonos*, those who serve). 1 Tim. 3:8
10. In assemblies women were to keep _____. 1 Cor. 14:34, 35; 1 Tim. 2:10-12
11. Members were to _____ those over them. Heb. 13:17

IV. How many overseers (elders, bishops, pastors) were in each church?

1. _____ were ordained in each congregation. Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5
2. These congregations had _____. Acts 15:2; 20:17; Phil. 1:1

V. Did one have to meet certain qualifications before he could serve in these offices?

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|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Apostles_____ Acts 1:21, 22 | 4. Evangelists_____ 2 Tim. 2:24, 25 |
| 2. Elders_____ 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9 | 5. Teachers_____ 1 Pet. 4:11 |
| 3. Deacons_____ 1 Tim. 3:8-13 | |



The Drawing for the Back of the "Organization" Sheet.
(See page 5.)