

BIBLE CHALLENGE 2019

Week 30: July 21-27

Who Leads the Church?

Read: Exodus 3:16-18; 4:15-17; 7:1-2; 12:21; 17:5-6; 18:12,14-23; 19:7; 24:1,9,14; Leviticus 4:15; Numbers 8:25-26; 11:16,24-25,30; 16:25; Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; 18:20-22; 19:12; 21:3-6,19-20; 21:20; 22:15-18;25:7-9; 27:1; 29:10; 31:9,28; Joshua 7:6; 8:10; 23:2; 24:1,31; Judges 2:7; 1 Samuel 8:4; 2 Samuel 3:17; 1 Kings 8:1; Ezra 10:14; Jeremiah 3:15; Joel 1:14; Matthew 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-15; Acts 1:17-22; 6:1-7; 12:1; 14:14,23; 15:1-21; 16:4; 20:17,28; 21:18; 1 Corinthians 12:27-30; Galatians 1:1-2; Ephesians 2:20; 4:11; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 2:7,12; 3:1-13; 4:14; 5:17; 2 Timothy 1:11; Titus 1:5-11; Hebrews 12:24; James 5:14; 1 Peter 2:9; 5:1-5; 2 John 1; 3 John 1; Revelation 4:4; 22:18-19. Also read Ruth 4 and Hebrews 10 in full.

What are the offices of the church? In other words, who should be in roles of leadership? Or, maybe we should word it this way, are "Apostles" and "Prophets" still meant to be a part of the church leadership? There are certainly an abundance of names and titles that people give to themselves — everything from prophet to apostle, to Bishop and Archbishop, to Cardinal, and people even go as far as to talk about Popes and Patriarchs. What does the Bible say about these things?

Provisional, Special, and Ongoing Offices:

As one looks at the offices that God has established to govern his church, they really fall into three classes: the Provisional offices of the Old Testament, Special Offices that are not always around, but are there for important events in church history, and Continuing offices that are normative as we continue through the New Testament era.

Old Testament Provisional Offices:

Probably one of the most important of these Old Testament offices is that of the Covenant Mediator. Adam originally served this role for mankind until he fell into Sin. In the ultimate sense, Christ is the New Adam and thus the mediator of a new covenant. There were others, though, who served in offices that provided spiritual leadership to God's people.

Judges: For about 350 years, Israel was led and protected by Judges. Primarily these figures functioned as redeemers, overthrowing the oppressors of the people of Israel. In some cases, they served as rulers, priests, and prophets, too.

Prophet, Priest, and King: In ancient Israel, the Judge would be replaced by three separate offices. The Prophet spoke for God, the King was the protector of the people, and the Priest was the intercessor between man and God. All of these offices, including that of the Judge, are fulfilled in Christ's Mediatorial Office.

Special Offices:

There are two special offices: the prophet and apostle. These offices are described as providing the foundation upon which the church is built.

Prophets: Literally, a prophet's role was to be the mouthpiece of God, most of this was done in the context of preaching to the people and exhorting them to live in a way that honors God. Sometimes this included foretelling what would take place. The writing prophets had the added responsibility of acting kind of like Covenant Lawyers (or prosecutors), making the case that God had been faithful to his covenant while the people had not been faithful. The role of the prophet would be superseded by that of the Apostle in the New Testament era. It should be noted that while people like the title, there are no longer legitimate prophets left today.

Apostles: An Apostle was called by Christ and appointed by Christ to serve as his ambassador or emissary, given the power to heal and to work miracles. They also went out with the authority and inspiration by the Holy Spirit to speak Truth to the church (thus the Canon is established upon apostolic writings). They formed the foundation and base for the early Christian church's leadership.

Again, like that of the Prophet, they were special offices that ceased to be part of the church today (though again, some people like titles and identify themselves as such).

Ongoing Offices:

There are two offices that are clearly ongoing, that of the Elder and that of the Deacon. There are several other offices that some church groups hold to as well.

Elder: These are the Biblical overseers in the life of the church. There are two Greek words that are used interchangeably to speak of this same office: *Presbuteros* (Elder) and *Episkopos* (Overseer or Bishop). They are ultimately charged with leading the church into maturity and protecting the congregation from error.

Deacon: Literally, this word means, "servant." And thus, their office is one of service and caregiving, with a focus on those who have no one to care for them (the widows and orphans especially).

Pastor: In many Reformed traditions, the Pastor is considered a kind of specialized Elder, in some traditions, this is practiced as an independent office. Like the Elders, the Pastor is charged with leading the church into maturity and protecting the congregation from error, but his emphasis is in the realm of teaching.

Administrator: The gift of Administration is sometimes treated as an office in Christ's church and this serves as the equivalent of our Trustee. Ultimately they are tasked with ensuring that the work of the church happens in a smooth and orderly way.

Evangelist: Sometimes there are those who have a particular gift of evangelism and are called to serve the church primarily in that way. We often call such people, "missionaries" though the term missionary never shows up in the Bible.

Teacher: In some circles, the office of teacher is set apart. In the German Reformed church in the 1800's, those who taught in seminary were set apart and treated as a separate office in the church.

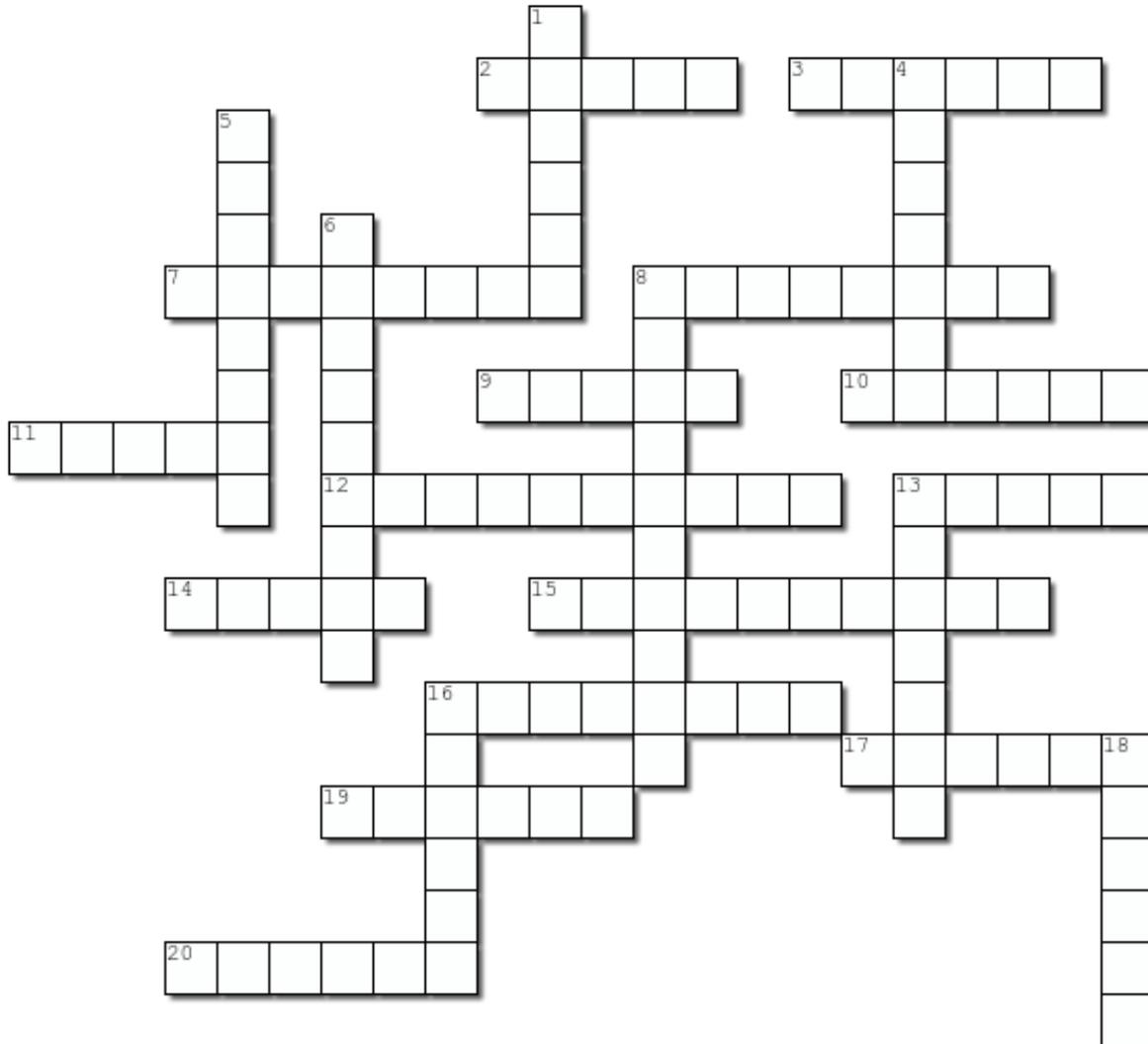
Popes and Arch-Bishops and Cardinals, Oh my!

Recently I was in a debate with a Roman Catholic apologist over the nature of the church leadership...in this case, him arguing that the Popes led the church back to the Apostolic age. This, of course, is blatantly untrue. Innocent I, in the 5th century AD, was the first to claim the office of Pope, prior to that, Rome was ruled by a Bishop and Clement of Rome (a 1st Century Bishop of Rome) claimed that Bishops and Elders were equal — no hierarchy nor ascending power and authority. Yet, the Roman Catholic tradition has invented a number of offices representing ascending powers in the church, the Pope (or Patriarch in Eastern Orthodox circles) being the top dog. There is no Biblical support for this role nor is there any evidence of it in the earliest Christian church.

King:

Ultimately, the church is a monarchy in the Scriptures with Christ as the Head and as the King over it. We must submit to the King's rule in all we do and how we do it. Jesus is the ultimate leader for the church. He defined its purpose and has given us a mission. The key thing is that we do it.

Week 30 - Church Leadership



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

Across

2. This was the punishment for a prophet who speaks a false word.
3. This is Moses' father-in-law who suggested he delegate authority to judges.
7. An early Missionary or Evangelist who traveled with Paul.
8. Jesus is the _____ of a new Covenant.
9. John directs his third letter to this church leader.
10. This is an office of service.
11. This is where Samuel was when the Elders came to him seeking a king.
12. '_____ I command of you, you shall be careful to do.'
13. Who was Moses' prophet?
14. At this age, the priest was expected to step down from active service in the Temple.
15. Christians are a 'royal _____.'
16. Paul says that he was appointed a _____ and an Apostle.
17. Moses was sent to this group of Leaders of Israel.
19. This is the Latin equivalent of 'Overseer.'
20. The Apostles' first job was to devote themselves to _____ and ministry of the word.

Down

1. Apostles were given the authority to preach and cast out _____.
4. This is the gift of Administration applied to the offices of the church.
5. If Jesus is King of the Church, then the system of government for the church is ultimately a _____.
6. This was the first Roman official to claim Papal authority (2 words.)
8. A prophet is essentially the _____ of God.
13. Jesus gathered twelve disciples and called them to serve under this title.
16. This office is kind of a specialized Elder with a focus on teaching.
18. There is a diversity of gifts but all come from one _____.