

Are bishops of today following the Scriptures?

[CAVEAT: Everything between the pink brackets that is written in bold, ten-point, italic fonts are not to be taken as part of the scriptures. They are only my attempt to help the readers understand the scripture better. T.A.H.]

Ephesians 2:20 states that the foundation of the congregation is built on the Apostles and prophets with **Yahshua** being the chief cornerstone. So, for many years the leadership of the congregation would have had to have been under the guidance of the Apostles. They, including Paul, were the "sent ones." There is no scriptural evidence nor any reliable historical evidence that there were any monarchical bishops over the New Covenant Congregation in the times of the Apostles. There was no authority given by the Apostles for there to be one after their departure. Is this shocking? This also will be shocking to many people. There was no such thing as a threefold ministry with a bishop having authority to rule over one or more congregations by delegating authority to the elders and the elders delegating authority to the deacons! A bishop (overseer) is an elder serving a function in the congregation. A bishop was not a title or office of exalted lordship as it soon became after the demise of the Apostles! Peter, one of the founders of the Congregation, made that point clear.

First Peter 5 (1) The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of **Messiah**, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: (2) Feed the flock of **Yahweh** which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; (3) Neither as being sovereigns over **Yahweh's** heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. (4) And when the **Chief Shepherd** shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. (5) Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all *of you* be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for **Yahweh** resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. (6) Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of **Yahweh**, that **He** may exalt you in due time: (7) Casting all your care upon **Him**; for **He** careth for you.

The Greek word "episkopoi" was translated as "bishop" only four times in the writings of **Yahshua's** first century followers. "Episkopoi" simply means "overseer." The overseers were the elders who were the pastors and teachers. The deacons took on special menial tasks to serve the congregation. An example of this is recorded in the sixth chapter of Acts.

Acts 6 (1) And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. (2) Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of **Yahweh**, and serve tables. (3) Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. (4) But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the **Word**. (5) And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: (6) Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them.

The word "Episkopoi," as used in I Timothy 3:1 & 2 and Titus 1:7, was simply describing the qualification of an overseer and not a monarchical ruler over the Congregation.

First Timothy 3 (1) This *is* a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. (2) A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

Titus 1 (7) For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of **Yahweh**; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

In I Peter 2:25, Peter was speaking of **Yahshua** as being the overseer of souls.

I Peter 2 (25) For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the **Shepherd** and **Bishop** of your souls. In the first of the following writings, Paul mentions bishops again. In all the other writings referring to the leadership of the congregations, the bishops were called elders. In one place they were simply called overseers.

Philippians 1 (1) Paul and Timotheus, the servants of **Yahshua Messiah**, to all the saints in **Messiah Yahshua** which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

They ordained elders (plural) in every city.

Acts 14 (23) And when they had ordained them elders in every Assembly, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to **Yahweh**, on **Whom** they believed.

Acts 15 (2) When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

Acts 16 (4) And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.

Notice that Paul sent for the elders of the congregation at Corinth. He did not send for the elder of the Congregation. In the next several verses, the elders are referred to instead of the elder.

Acts 20 (17) And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the Assembly. ... (28) Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the Assembly of **Yahweh**, which he hath purchased with **His Own** blood.

Acts 21 (18) And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.

First Timothy 5 (17) Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

Titus 1 (5) For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:

James 5 (14) Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the Assembly; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the **Sovereign**:

First Peter 5 (1) The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of **Messiah**, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: (2) Feed the flock of **Yahweh** which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; (3) Neither as being sovereigns over **Yahweh's** heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

Notice what **Yahshua** told his Apostles the night before His death. They were having a discussion among themselves about which one of them was the greatest (most important).

Luke 22 (25) And **He** said unto them, **The kings of the Gentiles exercise rule over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.** (26) **But ye shall not be so:** but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. (27) **For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as He that serveth.**

Monarchical rule by a bishop certainly was not introduced into the New Covenant Congregation during the

time of the Apostles, nor was it sanctioned by them. The bishops were simply elders with equal authority. Now, instead of following the principles that **Yahshua** taught concerning being humble, it seems to be the goal of many human beings to be overlords, highly esteemed by other human beings.

[Revised in 2025 by T.A.H.]