



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Issue II

The Preeminence of the Lord Jesus Christ

As seen in the Book of Colossians

by – Robert L. Ashman

The most important thing in the heart of God the Father is the exaltation of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, which can be shown in the book of Colossians.

In Colossians 1:18 it states: *“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”*

The book of Colossians gives examples of the preeminence of the Lord Jesus Christ in several different things and relationships.

I. The Preeminence of Christ is Seen in the Government of the Universe.

Colossians 1:16 gives a brief structure of both the visible and invisible spheres of government:

“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.”

This verse lists four aspects of both the heavenly and earthly spheres of government; thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers. The Lord Jesus Christ relates to these in the following ways:

- A. The Lord Jesus Christ created all the spheres of authority in heaven and earth – Colossians 1:16.
- B. All the spheres of heavenly and earthly authority were created for the use and purpose of the Lord Jesus Christ – Colossians 1:16.
- C. The Lord Jesus Christ existed before the existence of any government of the universe – Colossians 1:17.
- D. The administration of both the visible and the invisible spheres of government is sustained by the Lord Jesus Christ – Colossians 1:17.
- E. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of all the government of the universe – Colossians 2:10.

II. The Preeminence of Christ in All Things is Shown by His Personhood.

- A. All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily – Colossians 2:9 (All the attributes and characteristics of the Godhead are present in the Lord Jesus Christ).

(continued on page 87)

Dear Members of the Body:

Greetings in the wonderful name of our Savior and Living Head, the Lord Jesus Christ! Things have been exciting around the ministry here in the last few months.

NEW CATALOG

We are sending our long awaited fourth edition of GRACE CLEARINGHOUSE CATALOG with this issue of the BSN. This catalog is the result of years of gathering together a collection of helpful resources. The major goal of Grace Clearinghouse has been to assemble and supply to other saints and ministries materials which are:

1. In defense of the King James Bible and its Majority Greek Text.
2. Dispensational in their approach to Bible study.
3. Resourceful as Bible study reference material.

NEW DISCOUNTS

Please take special note that GCH is now a discount distributor. In the past all of our Bibles have been offered at a 20% discount. Now all orders receive a discount of 20% or more.

EXTRA CATALOGS

If you would like to receive additional copies of our catalog, please let us know and we will be glad to send them to you.

BOOKSTORE, BOOK TABLE OR LIBRARY?

Because of the years of labor spent in our literature ministry, we would like to offer our help in the establishment of a book ministry in your own local assembly, if you have an interest. It may be a library, simple "book table," or a full fledged "bookstore." We offer to make ourselves available to serve you in these areas. We would be more than glad to help in any way we can.

NEW MANAGING EDITOR

Anyone receiving the BSN from the very beginning knows how GREATLY the paper has changed from its first issue. This is largely the responsibility of our dear brother Neal Locker. We wish to express our appreciation to him for faithfully serving as our Managing Editor in Issues #3-7. Due to an effort to make the entire production of the BSN an "in house" operation, Andy Sneidar has been serving as our new managing editor beginning with Issue #8. We are grateful for his faithfulness and joy of service in this capacity.

ARTICLES

It is our sincere desire that the BSN be as helpful to the Bible student as it possibly can. Therefore we could use your help in obtaining good articles, outlines, Bible studies, poems, and ministry ideas. We would count it a real privilege if you could send us materials for consideration. If you have a computer, please send the materials on a disk (3-1/2 or 5-1/4) if possible.

PRINTING NEEDS

If we can be of service to you in the area of printing, please feel free to call on us. Part of our goal in securing our printing equipment was to help other ministries reduce their printing costs. We can send you pricing information if you desire.

CHANGES AT GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

After a transitional period some changes have now taken place here at GBC. A transition in 1985-86 led us to an important DISPENSATIONAL change. The latest change was a STRUCTURAL one. Our assembly has moved from a CONGREGATIONAL and PASTORAL form of government to one of ELDERSHIP.

For over two years we have focused our attention on studying the purpose and

(continued next page)

Bible Student's Notebook

This biweekly publication (24 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of *rich* Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "Movement," "Organization," "Mission," or separate body of believers, but is sent forth to and for all "saints."

SUBSCRIPTION

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2 years (48 issues) - \$72⁰⁰; 3 years (48 issues) - \$96⁰⁰;
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PATRIARCHS

Remember that it is our responsibility as husbands and fathers to take the truths we learn from God's Word, the truths that we hold dear, and impart them to our families.

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www.BibleStudentsNotebook.com

PO Box 265
Windber, PA 15963
Office: (800) 784-6010

bsn@studysshelf.com

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. – Editor
Andre Sneidar – Managing Editor
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- B. All wisdom and knowledge are hid in Christ – Colossians 2:3 (All true knowledge and wisdom emanate from the Lord Jesus Christ. There is, however, a false knowledge in the world apart from the Lord Jesus Christ).

III. The Preeminence of Christ is Seen by the Relationships in the Body of Christ.

- A. The ways which people identify themselves amongst other people mean nothing in the Body of Christ. The only things which people can offer to others in the Body of Christ have been received from Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is all to each member of the Body of Christ – Colossians 3:11.
- B. Christ dwells in each and every member of the Body of Christ – Colossians 3:11.

IV. The Preeminence of Christ is Shown by the Extent and Depth of His Work on the Cross.

- A. Christ has reconciled all things unto Himself by the blood of His cross – Colossians 1:20 (This does not mean that Christ will

(continued from previous page)

function of the local church. During this time we have been preparing faithful men to share in this ministry. We have now fulfilled a threefold plan: 1) We have ordained elders 2) We have revised our church constitution and 3) I have resigned as pastor. I continue to serve, along with the other elders, in the local ministry here at GBC. The other elders of our assembly are: Greg Eadie, Rick Lemons, and Andy Sneider. (For further information on this subject please see the article entitled "The Office of a Bishop" in this issue).

GRACE EDIFICATION MINISTRIES

At the same time we are establishing a new ministry called Grace Edification Ministries (GEM). My resignation allows me to take on the development of this new ministry. We are taking some of our current ministries and combining them with some proposed ones to create GEM. Many aspects of the new ministries are long ranged. Look in this issue of the BSN for further information concerning GEM.

We have many more plans that will change the face of our current local ministry. These are busy and exciting days as we strive to learn afresh the teachings of the Scripture and put them into operation.

A CLOSING THOUGHT

We are fully aware that the issues of the BSN, this one included, carry articles that are non-traditional to say the least, if not extremely controversial. It is important that you recognize the spirit in which they are written and published.

save the whole world, but that the blood of the cross made it possible for Christ to justly and righteously accept any man when they believe the gospel).

- B. Christ has forgiven each saved person for all their trespasses – Colossians 2:13.

V. The Preeminence of Christ can be Shown by Each Christian's Response to His Work on the Cross.

- A. All things which a person does, whether in word or deed, should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ – Colossians 3:17 (In every conversation and deed, the Christian is to represent the interests and goals of the Lord Jesus Christ).
- B. The Christian's prayer and goal should be to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God – Colossians 4:12 (To "stand perfect" means the progressive conformity through time of our lives to all of God's goals and desires for the Body of Christ. It means that God would accomplish and fulfill His goals and desires through our lives.) ■

We have no corner on truth, nor does anyone else. Therefore we do not expect our readers to agree with everything that appears within the pages of the BSN. But we do trust that you will study out the information and that it will STIMULATE further Bible study. If you are in ANY WAY encouraged to turn to the Scripture, then the goal of the BSN has been accomplished. We do ask you to keep an OPEN BIBLE and an OPEN MIND.

We agree with the words of George Whitefield when he said "I truly love all that love the glorious Emmanuel, and though I cannot depart from the principles which I believe are clearly revealed in the Book of God, yet I can cheerfully associate with those that differ from me, if I have reason to think that they are united to our common Head."

Your brother-in-grace,
(much better than being your "brother-in-LAW")



Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.
II Corinthians 4:5
05/1992

Keeping Truth in Balance:

The Unity of Paul's Epistles

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

In the last issue of the *Bible Student's Notebook*™ we carried an article demonstrating the IMPORTANCE of rightly dividing Paul's epistles. It is our purpose in this issue to balance this truth by showing the **UNITY** of Paul's epistles; Romans through Philemon.

The early epistles of Paul were written in a time of incomplete knowledge (I Corinthians 13:9-10) and therefore **MUST** be understood in light of the **FULL** and **COMPLETE** (Colossians 1:25) revelation which was committed to writing in Paul's latter epistles. The earlier writings are nevertheless written to the **same** body of believers.

1. **The ONE BODY is addressed by Paul in BOTH SETS of epistles.**

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into ONE BODY ..." (I Corinthians 12:13).

"So we, being many, are ONE BODY..." (Romans 12:5).

"And that he might reconcile both unto God in ONE BODY ..." (Ephesians 2:16).

"... To the which also ye are called in ONE BODY ..." (Colossians 3:15).

2. **This ONE BODY is called THE BODY OF CHRIST in BOTH SETS of epistles.**

"Now ye are THE BODY OF CHRIST ..." (I Corinthians 12:27).

"... For the edifying of THE BODY OF CHRIST," (Ephesians 4:12).

3. **This ONE BODY is composed of JEWS and GENTILES according to BOTH SETS of epistles.**

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, WHETHER WE BE JEWS OR GENTILES ..." (I Corinthians 12:13).

"And having reconciled BOTH unto God in one body ..." (Ephesians 2:16).

4. **According to BOTH SETS of epistles, the ONE BODY was formed through a spiritual BAPTISM performed by the Holy Spirit, placing us into Christ's Body.**

"For by ONE SPIRIT are WE ALL BAPTIZED into ONE BODY ..." (I Corinthians 12:13).

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were BAPTIZED INTO JESUS CHRIST ..." (Romans 6:3).

"For as many of you as have been BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST," (Galatians 3:27).

"There is ONE BODY, and ONE SPIRIT ... ONE BAPTISM," (Ephesians 4:4).

5. **According to BOTH SETS of epistles, this BAPTISM was INTO CHRIST'S DEATH.**

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH? Therefore we are BURIED WITH HIM by BAPTISM unto death ..." (Romans 6:3, 4).

"BURIED WITH HIM in BAPTISM ..." (Colossians 2:12).

6. **Paul knew about THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY in BOTH SETS of his epistles.**

"Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY which was kept secret since the world began," (Romans 16:25).

"How that by REVELATION he made known unto me THE MYSTERY; (as I wrote afore in few words ..." Ephesians 3:3).

7. **Paul's "MY GOSPEL" is what is being preached in BOTH SETS of epistles.**

"In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to MY GOSPEL," (Romans 2:16).

"Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to MY GOSPEL ..." (Romans 16:25).

"Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to MY GOSPEL," (II Timothy 2:8).

8. **Jews and Gentiles are being RECONCILED in BOTH SETS of epistles.**

"And all things are of God, who hath RECONCILED us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given us the ministry of RECONCILIATION; To wit, that God was in Christ, RECONCILING THE WORLD unto himself ..." (II Corinthians 5:18, 19).

"And that he might RECONCILE BOTH unto God in one body..." (Ephesians 2:16).

9. **According to BOTH SETS of Paul's epistles, this RECONCILING was for THE WORLD, and thus INCLUDED the IDOL worshipping HEATHEN, which were ENEMIES – not just those that were ALLIES of Israel.**

"For if, when we were ENEMIES, we were RECONCILED to God by the death of his Son ..." (Romans 5:10).

"To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the HEATHEN ..." (Galatians 1:16).

"... That we should go unto the HEATHEN and they unto the circumcision," (Galatians 2:9).

"Ye know that ye were GENTILES, carried away unto these DUMB IDOLS, even as ye were led," (I Corinthians 12:2).

"For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from IDOLS to serve the living and true God," (I Thessalonians 1:9).

Also note this passage from Acts 17:16-34:

"... His (Paul's) spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city was GIVEN TO IDOLATRY ... Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, ... I found an ALTAR with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD ... Certain men clave unto him, and believed ..."

"To wit, that God was in Christ, RECONCILING THE WORLD unto himself..." (II Corinthians 5:19).

"And you, that were sometime ALIENATED and ENEMIES in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he RECONCILED," (Colossians 1:21).

"... That ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh ... that at that time ye were ... ALIENS from the commonwealth of Israel ... And that he might RECONCILE BOTH unto God in one body ..." (Ephesians 2:11-16).

10. **Paul, in BOTH SETS of his epistles, speaks of having BEGOTTEN his converts.**

"... For in Christ Jesus I have BEGOTTEN you through the gospel," (I Corinthians 4:15).

"I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have BEGOTTEN in my bonds:" (Philemon 10).

This is in contrast to Peter and John's use of the term "Born AGAIN."

11. **Although Paul water baptized in his early ministry, he makes it clear that he was not working under a commission which sent him to do so.**

"For Christ SENT ME NOT TO BAPTIZE, but to preach the gospel ..." (I Corinthians 1:17).

"... ONE BAPTISM," (Ephesians 4:5).

12. **Paul taught his converts in BOTH SETS of epistles to FOLLOW him.**

"Wherefore I beseech you, be ye FOLLOWERS OF ME," (I Corinthians 4:16).

"Be ye FOLLOWERS OF ME, even as I also am of Christ," (I Corinthians 11:1).

"Brethren, be ye FOLLOWERS together OF ME ..." (Philippians 3:17).

13. **Paul tells us that the BODY OF CHRIST was edified and brought to maturity through gifts which operated during the “Acts period.”**

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of THE BODY OF CHRIST: till WE ALL come in the unity (vs. 3-6) of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that WE HENCEFORTH be no more children ...” (Ephesians 4:11-14).

14. **Paul knew during the “Acts Period” that this maturing (or perfection) would take place. This was NOT something NEW, but this was something which was to “GROW UP.”**

“For we know IN PART, and we prophesy IN PART. But when that which is PERFECT is come, then that which is IN PART shall be done away. When I was a CHILD, I spake as a CHILD, I understood as a CHILD, I thought as a CHILD: but when I became a MAN, I put away CHILDISH THINGS,” (I Corinthians 13:9-11).

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a PERFECT MAN, unto the measure of the STATURE OF THE FULNESS OF CHRIST: That we HENCEFORTH be NO MORE CHILDREN ... MAY GROW UP ...” (Ephesians 4:13-15).

15. **During the “Acts Epistles” Paul began to see much body truth and the diminishing of kingdom doctrines were evident, such as:**

•Healing and the Physical

“For which cause we faint not; though our OUTWARD MAN perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day ... While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ...” (II Corinthians 4:16-18).

“... There was given to me a THORN in the flesh...therefore will I glory in my INFIRMITIES ...” (II Corinthians 12:7, 9).

•Unanswered Prayer

“For this cause I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee:...” (II Corinthians 12:8, 9).

16. Paul said that God would perform his work in the Philippian saints – a work which had begun in Acts chapter 16. This is not a NEW work, but a CONTINUATION of that same work which Paul had delivered to them at the FIRST.

“For your fellowship in the gospel from the FIRST DAY UNTIL NOW; being confident of this very thing, that he which hath BEGUN a good work in you WILL PERFORM IT UNTIL the day of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:5, 6).

17. The COURSE which Paul was on in Acts chapter 20 was the SAME COURSE which he COMPLETED in II Timothy.

“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might FINISH MY COURSE with joy, and the ministry of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God,” (Acts 20:24).

“I have fought a good fight, I have FINISHED MY COURSE, I have kept the faith:” (II Timothy 4:7).

18. One can only come to appreciate the DIVINE ORDER of the Pauline epistles in the Bible when he sees them as a unit.

The “Acts epistles” and “Post-Acts epistles” are intermingled to form a larger and single set of epistles.

Sometimes our “Mid-Acts” brothers have under-emphasized the difference between both sets of Paul’s epistles, while our “Acts 28” brothers have over-emphasized it. May each of us be careful not to over-emphasize nor under-emphasize their significance. Let us learn to let God do the “Right Division.” ■

The Office of a Bishop

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

“This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work” (I Timothy 3:1).

In I Timothy chapter three, Paul gives the two scriptural offices¹ of the local church: Bishop and Deacon (c.f. Philippians 1:1). It is our purpose in this article to briefly discuss the office of Bishop.

The Office Defined

First, it is important that we understand what the word *bishop* means. Williams tells us that, “The word ‘episcopos’ (bishop) at that time was a commercial term. It meant the manager of a shop, the chief clerk of an office, or director of a public company, etc. It had not the religious meaning of today.” Wuest states that, “The word came originally from secular life, referring to a foreman of a construction gang, or the supervisor of a building construction, for instance.” Thayer defines the word as, “an overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly; any curator, guardian, or superintendent.” Webster defines the word as, “An overseer; a spiritual superintendent, ruler or director.”

Elder: A Synonym Of Bishop

The word *elder* is at times used as a synonym for the word *bishop* in the Bible. Scofield, in his reference Bible, writes, “Elder and Bishop designate the same office (Titus 1:5, 7; Acts 20:17; c.f. vs. 28), the former referring to the man, the latter to a function of the office.” Williams, once again discussing the word for bishop, remarks, “It had not the religious meaning of today. It meant bishop, ruler, presbyter or elder. All these terms are equal.”

It is important to understand that the word *elder* is not used exclusively as a synonym for *bishop*, as Chafer points out. “The word *elder* has three meanings in the New Testament: (1) A reference to age or maturity (c.f. Luke 15:25; I Timothy 5:2); (2) A continuation of the Old Testament office of elders over Israel (c.f. Matt. 16:21; 26:47, 57; Acts 4:5, 23); (3) A name for the one officer of the local church to whom is assigned authority especially in the direction of spiritual matters pertaining to the church which he serves.”

The Plurality Of The Office

The Bible teaches that the office of Bishop is a plural one within the local church. There is no such teaching, as is common in so many churches today, of a “one man rule”. Note the plural use of *bishop* and *elder* in the following passages:

*“Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Phillippi, with the **bishops** and deacons,” (Philippians 1:1).*

*“And when they had ordained them **elders** in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed,” (Acts 14:23).*

1. It is important, in the course of one's study on this subject, to recognize that “pastor” is *not* anywhere used in Scripture as an office of the church. Paul's single use of the word *pastor* is found in Ephesians chapter four. There we find it among a list of gifts given to the early church. A closer look at the surrounding context will reveal that all the gifts listed were temporary in nature. The terms that Paul constantly used for the offices of the church were *bishop* (or *elder*) and *deacon*.

The *pastorate*, as we know it today, is a tradition born out of the Protestant Reformation in answer to the Roman Priesthood, and has *no* scriptural foundation.

*“And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the **elders** of the church,” (Acts 20:17). “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,” (Titus 1:5).*

This plurality of elders (or bishops) is called the presbytery in I Timothy 4:14.

The Responsibility Of The Office

*“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you **overseers**, to **feed** the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood,” (Acts 20:28).*

*“For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he **take care** of the church of God?” (I Timothy 3:5).*

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

The responsibility of the bishops (or elders) is to “oversee,” “feed,” and “rule” the local church. The word *rule* is an interesting and often mis-used one. The same word is translated in Titus 3:8 as *maintain*. Strong defines the word as “to stand before, i.e., (in rank) to preside, or (by impl.) to practice: – maintain, be over, rule.” It is the responsibility of the bishops to maintain the church. Look at Webster’s definition of the word maintain:

1. To hold, preserve or keep in any particular state or condition; to support; to sustain; not to suffer to fail or decline.
2. To hold; to keep; not to lose or surrender.
3. To continue; not to suffer to cease.
4. To keep up; to uphold; to support the expense of.

Paul states concerning the bishop:

“Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers,” (Titus 1:9).

The Qualifications For Office

The office of a bishop is truly an “any man” ministry. It is not reserved for an elite group of professional men. If a man (i.e., any man) qualifies he has the opportunity to enlarge his service to that of an elder if he so desires. Note carefully the following two passages:

*“If **any be blameless**, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly,” (Titus 1:6).*

*“This is a **true saying**, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work,” (I Timothy 3:1).*

The qualifications for the office of bishop are laid forth by Paul in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Stuart Allen has written concerning this office of bishop, “Bishops in the time of the Apostle Paul were not highly educated scholars who had been theologically trained and wore a particular garb. There was no division into clergy and laity. Bishops were ordinary believers who had been adjudged faithful and had the spiritual qualifications the Apostle is about to enumerate (I Timothy 3).”

The plan of Pauline establishment of the local church, as with any other doctrine taught in the Bible, simply cannot be improved upon. As a matter of fact, to attempt any other method, no matter how popular or seemingly ingenious, would at very best be weak and less than sufficient for the divine goal. Let each of us take a fresh look at this subject in light of the Scriptures and apply the old Berean test (Acts 17:11; I