

THE CHURCH AND HER GOVERNMENT
ACTS 6:1-7

Introduction:

1. There are so many churches and so many ecclesiastical bodies in the world today that it really boggles the mind.
2. Which is the right church? What is the right religion? Who are we to believe?
3. Always remember that the right way is the Bible way!
4. In our text we see clearly Jesus' form of church government. This is the pattern in which all of the Lord's churches have followed and still follow.

I. THE THREE TYPES OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT IN THE WORLD TODAY.

A. Episcopal government.

1. This type of government recognizes a three-fold ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons.
2. In this system a great deal of authority is held by the bishop, who alone has the right to ordain others, has the oversight of a large number of churches in his "diocese," and exercises authority over the clergy in his area.
3. While it appears that Paul, Timothy and Titus had some authority over a few churches, it seems to be more of an advisory role than a ruling role. **1 Corinthians 4:17** *For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.;* **2 Corinthians 8:16-17** *But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord.*

B. Presbyterian government.

1. This is a system based upon presbyters or elders governing the church.
2. A distinction is made between teaching elders and ruling elders.
 - a). The teaching elder receives a "call" from a church and is then ordained to minister in the Word. **cf. Ephesians 4:11** *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,* (the words "pastors and teachers" refer to the same person.
 - b). A ruling elder cannot assume the ministry of the Word and perform the sacraments, but is ordained to assist in governing the church, handling disciplinary problems, and organizing the finances of the church.

C. Congregational government.

1. Congregationalism is the system of church government whereby the church is recognized as independent and autonomous, that is, that no one person has the right to exercise dominion or authority over the local church.
2. Stress is laid upon the fact that Jesus alone is the Head of the church. **Colossians 1:18** *And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.*
3. Because believers as a whole represent the priesthood under the new covenant, there is no longer a special class of priests. **1 Peter 2:9** *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...*
4. If all believers have the right to immediate access to God through Jesus, there is no need to have a ministry which exercises a mediatory place between men and God. **1 Timothy 2:5** *For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus...*

5. This type of church government is the type that Baptists have historically held to, although there seems to be more authority given to pastors and elders in the Bible than some churches are willing to give. **Hebrews 13:7** *Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.; 17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.;*

II. THE TWO OFFICES IN THE CHURCH. **Philippians 1:1** *Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:*

A. Pastors. **1 Timothy 3:1-7***; Titus 1:7-9** *For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.*

1. These are qualifications for a PASTOR, not for a preacher.
2. These are qualifications which a man must meet BEFORE he assumes the office of a pastor, not something he strives to attain while he is pastoring.

D. Deacons. **1 Timothy 3:8-13*****

1. Again, these are qualifications that must be met before one is ordained as a deacon.
 - a). Notice there are some qualifications for the man's wife also. **v. 11*****
2. Deacons are to assume the physical duties of the church while pastors assume the spiritual duties. **Acts 6:2-3** *Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business..."*
3. Deacons are chose by the church because the church has a need, and they see in those men the necessary qualifications to handle the job.

Conclusion:

1. Proper church government is important for the furtherance of the gospel and the advancement of the kingdom of God.
2. So many times our understanding of church government is clouded by personal opinion rather than by a proper biblical understanding.
3. Jesus never intended for His churches to be governed by a dictatorial person or persons, but by love and concern for one another, and a reliance upon the Head, Jesus!