

New Testament Church Government
A Study Guide for Suffragan Bishops, District Elders, Pastors and Deacons

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Introduction

Government is a system of rules by which a group of people (large or small) are governed in order to conduct their affairs in an organized manner under the authority of a central leadership. One function of government is to provide a system for the many to cooperate as a single unit for the benefit of the whole. One of the most devastating times in Israel's history was, when each man "did that which was right in HIS own eyes." For any group or individual to function independently with out some form of unifying rule is anarchy and results in chaos. At not time are we free to do our own thing. All of us are under some type of rule, be it in the home, an organization, the work place, our local community, state, or country. There are rules that govern our conduct, freedoms, responsibilities, obligations and privileges regardless of where we might reside. In short, government is a way of life for us all. There is no way it can be circumvented. Why is this? Simply because God, who is the author of authority, has determined that creation be subject to the governing forces of His will and purpose. From the beginning of time, God established a system of rule for Lucifer who was the "anointed cherub that covereth," the Arch Angel that had rule over the others. (Ezek. 28:11-19 and Isa. 14:12-17). In the Garden of Eden God established a single rule for Adam to follow and when there were just two (Adam and Eve), Eve became subject to her husband thus providing a system of rule for the smallest unit of society, the family.

Government and organization has always been a priority with God and His people. When the sons of Jacob grew into a nation, there were divided into tribes. Each tribe had a head and was organized in multiple levels of authority. Though they acted independently, they were first und the central authority of Moses, the Joshua and finally Judges who judged the people. In every case there were central leaders and sub leaders under them. In a similar manner, the local church is an independent entity under the leadership of a pastor, and all local churches combined are subject to their head, the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. When the time of the Kings came on the scene, with Saul as Israel's first king, a political central government was established. Under David the Levites were organized into 24 courses all subject to the High Priest in the service of the Temple.

When Jesus set us free, he did not release us from being governed. To the contrary, He, through systems already established, placed us under a more strict rule than in the the

past. Let us begin the subject of Church government, the system of authority that governs those in the Body of Christ.

This study of Church Government is divided into four sections, each one equally important.

1. The Governing Procedures (Rulers and authority established in church)
2. Judgment (For those who violate God's law, Excommunication & Discipline)
3. Confession and Restoration (The process of being reconciled with God)
4. The Financial Support of the Church. (Tithes and Offerings)

Also as part of this study let us keep in mind what the functions of the church are.

1. It is first of all the place of salvation, reconciliation with Jesus Christ.
2. It is a bread house, the place where souls are fed.
3. It is a school house where souls are spiritually educated.
4. It is a courthouse where transgressors are judged and "rehabilitated."