THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST AS A MODEL FOR LEADERSHIP:
A STUDY IN THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

by

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ABSTRACT
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Christ’s *munus triplex* or threefold office of prophet, priest and king serves as a helpful paradigm to understand Christ’s role in redemption, however it can also provide instruction as to how elders are to function as leaders. Whilst an elders’ prophetic role of teaching and priestly role of pastoral care may be broadly accepted in the church, there is often less attention given to the aspects of kingly rule by elders. This is especially evident in cultures dominated by individualism and those with an unhealthy scepticism for rule and authority.

This thesis seeks to demonstrate that kingship is an essential function of elders in their rule, authority and management of the church. Using the Pastoral Epistles, I shall establish that kingly rule is a dominant theme in Paul’s exhortation to Timothy and Titus. We observe Christ exalted as King of kings, His royal authority exercised in the appointment of Paul, and kingly functions of rule and authority are expected of Titus, Timothy and future church leaders.

We also observe that elders exercise kingly rule primarily through the faithful ministry of God’s Word. King like elders will lead the people of God in spiritual warfare to advance the kingdom, defend the church and act as faithful stewards of the household of God. Recovering a biblical understanding of how elders rule with kinglike authority glorifies God and brings great blessing to His people.
This thesis is dedicated to my beloved wife, Nicole.

Thank you for your constant encouragement,
sacrificial support and faithful love.

*Soli Deo Gloria*
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to provide context for the thesis by briefly surveying existing leadership models, reviewing the *munus tripex* and identifying a perceived gap in our understanding of leadership within the church. This thesis seeks to demonstrate that the Kingship of Christ is a biblical model for church leaders, and I will support this with a study of the Pastoral Epistles in subsequent chapters.

**Survey of Leadership Models**

A number of models of leadership have been developed to aid the church’s understanding of the role of elders, pastors and ministers.¹ Some of these models are based on careful analysis of Scripture, others drawn from sociological observations and some from business theory. It is beyond the scope of this paper to comprehensively review each model that has been developed. Nevertheless, it may be helpful to briefly sample a few models to provide broad context for this paper, and more specifically, demonstrate the need for a better understanding of biblical kingship as a paradigm for church leadership.²

When one thinks of leadership models based on biblical principles or characters, minds are often drawn to the idea of servant leadership. We recall Christ the King

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² Some of the referenced studies will be used for comparative purposes later in this thesis.
washing his disciples’ feet, sacrificially dying on the cross for His people and his profound teaching, “The greatest among you shall be your servant (Matt. 23:11).”\(^3\) For Christians, servanthood is synonymous with leadership. Church leaders are expected to be servant-leaders, following in the footsteps of Christ. Beyond the church, servant leadership was popularised throughout the business world by Greenleaf in *The Servant as Leader.*\(^4\)

Witmer has highlighted the Shepherd motif as a helpful paradigm for understanding the role of pastors in *The Shepherd Leader.*\(^5\) In this volume, the author posits that shepherding is a useful model for leadership as it finds its roots deep within the Old Testament example of Moses and David serving as shepherds. Shepherding continues into the New Testament with the ultimate fulfilment of Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd. And the shepherding motif continues into the life of the early church with the example of the Apostles and their care for the flock of God. Practically, shepherd leaders have a responsibility to know, feed, lead and protect the sheep.

Cooper has taken an approach which analyses the Apostle Paul’s ministry using contemporary business leadership theory such as transactional and transformational paradigms.\(^6\) By studying Paul’s relationship with Timothy, Cooper notes the maturing of the young church leader through Paul’s leadership style of positive vision, inspiration

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\(^3\) All Scripture quoted in this thesis will be taken from the *Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001).


and unrelenting pursuit of living the Christian life. The author concludes that transformational leaders must have three key relationships: to Christ, to doctrine and to others. These three key relationships empower leaders for ministry according to the author.

Hiebert has identified seven leadership pictures in an exegetical study of 2 Timothy 2, including a teacher, soldier, athlete, farmer, workman, vessel and slave. These diverse examples produce a composite sketch of the essential nature and function of godly leaders in community. To be an effective leader, Hiebert suggests that church leaders must focus on four relationships. Firstly, a leader must have an established relationship with God where he knows his identity, calling and accountability. Secondly, a leader must have a close and positive relationship with Scripture, with unswerving loyalty to handling God’s word rightly. Thirdly, God called leaders must relate well to others by being an example, rescuer of those entangled in sin and training up future leaders. Finally, a leader must relate well to himself, with the ability to exercise strong self discipline, whilst facing opposition and suffering.

Other models of leadership that have been applied to elders in churches today have been based on the lives of Moses, Nehemiah, Paul, or the Trinity. Other references could be cited to exemplify additional perspectives on leadership, but the studies highlighted thus far provide a sampling and sense of the various approaches that have been employed.

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10 Cooper, “The Transformational Leadership of the Apostle Paul.”
Taken together, these various but limited examples demonstrate a breadth of leadership motifs that have been developed and applied for the benefit of the church. They also indicate:

1) There is no one exhaustive motif that is sufficient to outline all leadership traits,
2) Each model provides unique insights into leadership roles and responsibilities,
3) It can be advantageous to study the life of biblical leaders (e.g. Christ and Paul) to glean lessons about leadership, and
4) There is utility in multiple perspectives contributing to a balanced picture of leadership to equip elders for ministry.

Given, the multitude of existing biblical, business and sociological studies on leadership, why is there a need for another study of kingship? It is the contention of this paper that whilst there are many helpful works on leadership models in the literature, the area of kingship has not received sufficient attention given cultural resistance to authority and concerns over abuse of power.12 Whilst one must be sensitive to the cultural climate, it is important not to allow culture to bias or cloud our understanding of Christian leadership. Rightly understood, a healthy appreciation and implementation of kingship principles will serve to complement and balance other existing models.

Christ as Prophet, Priest and King

An aspect of Christ’ character and work which has drawn some interest recently in leadership discussions, is a tri perspective approach based on the munus tripexus or

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threefold office (or triple cure) of prophet, priest and king.\textsuperscript{13} Despite recent leadership discussions, it is important to recognise the threefold paradigm was first articulated to assist us understand Christ’s mediatorial and redemptive work, rather than practical leadership helps. The \textit{munus triplex} was articulated in the early church, developed further throughout the Reformation across denominations, and the framework is being applied in aspects of the Christian church and ministry today.

     This formulation was first recorded by the early church historian Eusebius of Caesarea at the turn of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} Century, where he noted that the anointing of priest, kings and prophets in the Old Testament served as typical of the coming Christ.\textsuperscript{14} The \textit{munus triplex} was further developed by John Calvin during the Protestant Reformation in Chapter 15 of the \textit{Institutes of the Christian Religion}. In his introduction to the chapter Calvin writes,

     “Therefore, in order that faith may find a firm basis for salvation in Christ, and thus rest in him, this principle must be laid down: the office enjoined upon Christ by the Father consists of three parts. For he was given to be prophet, king and priest”\textsuperscript{15}


\textsuperscript{14} Eusebius, \textit{Eusebius--the Church History}, trans. Paul L. Maier (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2007), 28. (1.3.8) “Accordingly, it was not only the high priests, symbolically anointed with oil, who were designated among the Hebrews with the name Christ, but also the kings; for by divine directive they too were anointed by the prophets as symbolic Christs, since they carried in themselves the patterns of the regal and sovereign authority of the only true Christ, the divine Word, who rules over all. Similarly, some of the prophets themselves, by anointing, became types of Christ, so that all [three] refer to the true Christ, the divine Word, who is the only High Priest of the universe, the only King of all creation, and the only Archprophet of the Father”

The *munus triplex* found further support in systematic works such as Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformation across denominations. For example, the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* summarises the threefold offices of Christ in Question 23,\(^{16}\)

Q: What offices doth Christ execute as our Redeemer?  
A: Christ, as our Redeemer, executeth the offices of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation. (Acts 3:21-22; Heb. 12:25. Cf. 2 Cor. 13:3; Heb. 5:5-7; 7:25; Ps. 2:6; Isa. 9:6-7; Matt. 21:5; Ps. 2:8-11)

The Second London Baptist Confession states in Chapter 8 on Christ the Mediator,\(^ {17}\)

“It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, according to the covenant made between them both, to be the mediator between God and man; the *prophet, priest, and king*; head and saviour of the church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world; unto whom he did from all eternity give a people to be his seed and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.”

This is likewise reflected in other Reformed Confessions such as the Savoy Declaration and Westminster Confession of Faith demonstrating unity amongst Baptist, Congregational and Presbyterian churches in their understanding of the significance of Christ’s role of as Prophet, Priest and King in the work of redemption.\(^{18}\) Stroup also notes the central place of the *munus triplex* in Reformed theology and ministry.\(^ {19}\)

More recent works and discussions have encouraged fresh appreciation of the *munus triplex* and application in individual Christians, churches and its leaders. Beeke

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\(^{17}\) *Second London Baptist Confession of Faith* (London, 1689).

\(^{18}\) Chapter 8 of each of the Confessions are substantially the same as noted by James Anderson, “Tabular Comparison of 1646 WCF, 1658 Savoy Declaration, the 1677/1689 LBCF, and the 1742 PCF,” *Proginosko*, accessed November 6, 2017, URL http://www.proginosko.com/docs/wcf_sdfo_lbcf.html#SDFO8.

draws applications to the family setting as fathers are to be minister the word, intercede for and rule their households well.\textsuperscript{20} The \textit{munus triplex} has also been specifically applied to the mission of the body of Christ, the church.\textsuperscript{21} McKiddie had made helpful observation from Acts 6, applying the triperspective paradigm of prophets, priests and kings to the ministry of the Apostles.\textsuperscript{22} Studies by Johnson and Stevens have assessed the offices of Christ and attempted to focus application on church leadership.\textsuperscript{23} Clowney also provides some complementary observations regarding triperspective means of ministry within the church.\textsuperscript{24}

Perhaps, the most comprehensive contemporary work on the \textit{munis triplex} is by Belcher who has conducted a Biblical theology study of the role of prophets, priests and kings. Starting in Gen. 1-3, Belcher traces the threefold office in the garden of Eden, throughout the Old Testament and ultimate fulfilment in the Lord Jesus Christ. According to Belcher, Christ’s fulfilment has implications for the mission of the church, the role of the individual believer and also notes helpful application for church leaders.\textsuperscript{25}

\begin{enumerate}
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Taken together, the threefold office of Christ is well established across church history and across denominations. There is fresh appreciation of the *munus triplex* and how Christians might apply this to the home and wider global missions. Furthermore, there is increasing interest in how church leaders can imitate Christ in these three complementary offices of prophet, priest and king.

**The Munus Triplex applied to church life and leadership**

This section provides a brief overview of each office of the *munus triplex* and how each role can guide the church in its mission, and also how they influence church leadership. It is important to note that there will be overlap in some of the roles, nevertheless each office brings unique and helpful perspectives on church life and leadership. A failure to balance our appreciation of each role may skew our understanding of leadership and ministry.

*Christ’s prophetic office* is summarised in Question 24 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism:

> Q. 24. How doth Christ execute the office of a prophet?
> A. Christ executeth the office of a prophet, in revealing to us, by his word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation. (John 1:18; 15:15; 20:31, 1 Pet. 1:10-12)

As a prophet, Christ continues in the line of Moses, Elijah and Isaiah by acting as God’s mouthpiece and declaring God’s will for his people (Exod. 7:1-2, 1 Kings 17, Isa. 8:11). Nevertheless, whilst God has spoken at different times and in different ways, Christ is presented as the ultimate prophet and the final revelation to God’s church (Mark 8:27, Matt. 11:9-15, 16:13-14, Heb. 1:1-3). Belcher helpfully observes that Jesus also fulfils the role of a faithful prophet by His dependence and right handling of God’s Word, His reliance to God in prayer, in His suffering and in His deeds.26

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26 Ibid., 46–56.
Given Christ’s prophetic role, the church’s mission and its leaders are, “to follow in the prophetic office of Christ by proclaiming the revelation of God to a world desperately in need of hearing his word”.  

The church has a prophetic ministry in word, has been left to be ambassadors for Christ, are to be salt and light, and like prophets of the Old Testament, must call people to repent of sins and turn back to God.

Specifically addressing elders, Belcher points to church leaders as having a calling to prophetic ministry in their proclamation of God’s word (Eph. 4:11-12), have a responsibility regarding ministry of prayer (Acts 6:1-6), and are to grow the church through preaching (Acts 2:41, 19:20). Elders are to be committed to the study and preaching of God’s word, so that the church may be established and built up (2 Tim. 2:15, 4:1-2).

Christ’s priestly office is summarised in Question 25 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism,

Q. 25. How doth Christ execute the office of a priest?
A. Christ executeth the office of a priest, in his once offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God; and in making continual intercession for us. (Heb. 2:17, 7:24-25, 9:14, 28)

As a priest, Christ follows in the line of Aaron and the Levitical priesthood in their temple service of worship, sacrifice, and intercession for the people of God. Christ is the ultimate high priest in the order of Melchizidek who is able to perfectly relate to His people, intercede for them, and offer up a perfect sacrifice to reconcile them to God (John 17, Heb. 4:15, 7:25, Ps 110:4). Other priests served imperfectly and temporally, yet Christ serves perfectly for the eternal good of His people.

29 Belcher, Prophet, Priest, and King, 164.
The church likewise is to reflect Christ’s priestly role by being a kingdom of priests (1Pet. 2:5, 9-10, Rev. 1:5-6). God’s people are to intercede for the world, sacrificially serve and come alongside those in need by sympathising with their weakness. This understanding of a priesthood of all believers balances out abuses can mitigate unhealthy distinctions between clergy and laity.

Whilst it is true that there is no exclusive priestly title or office for church leaders today, elders and pastors still fulfil priest like roles in special intercession for their people. For example, elders are called to come alongside and pray for the sick (James 5:14). Paul demonstrates priestly concern in his epistles as they are riddled with pastoral prayers for the church (Rom. 1:8-10, Eph. 1:15-23, Phil. 1:3-11, Col. 1:3-14). Elders are also called to order worship and the household of God, much like priests of old.

Christ’s kingly office is summarised in Question 25 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism,

Q. 26. How doth Christ execute the office of a king?  
A. Christ executeth the office of a king, in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies. (Acts 15:14-16, Isa. 33:22, 32:1-2, 1 Cor. 15:25, Ps. 110.)

Christ came and defeated the enemies of sin and death, delivering His people from bondage, established His kingdom and exercises loving rule over His people. Christ exercises both justice and mercy, promotes peace and security in the kingdom, is seated on His throne and rules with power and might. Kingly rule can be reflected in the people of God as we advance the church through evangelism, helping people to

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33 Ibid., 191.
understand the need to personally submit their lives to King Jesus, and by promoting peace in our day.

In brief, the kingly role of pastors can be manifest in rule in the church, leading the people of God in spiritual battle, defending from enemies of the gospel, faithful stewardship and maintaining peace in the Kingdom of God. Aspects of biblical kingship will be developed more fully throughout this paper.

**The Need to Focus on Kingship**

Whilst the *munus triplex* has been used as a model for imitation in pastoral leadership, it is the contention of this paper that there is a specific need to focus on the kingly aspect. The rationale for greater attention on the kingship function is that it (1) counters cultural resistance to the idea of rule and authority in churches, (2) tackles church leadership failures and (3) addresses a perceived under emphasis of kingship education in seminary curriculums. Each of these hindrances will be discussed below.

**Countering Cultural Resistance**

Generally speaking, in a Western cultural context few would have problems viewing their pastor as “prophetic” by proclaiming God’s word, or “priestly” in intercession for the people, but concerns are often raised when an elder’s role is likened to a king. Guinness attributes much of the church’s scepticism to authority as being influenced by society’s pluralisation, personal choice and a misunderstanding of freedom. Guinness warns evangelicals in particular of the dangers of personal choice and argues that it might be an Achilles’ heel, “Whereas the Jews are the chosen people,

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so that their faith is their destiny, Evangelicals are a choosing people, and their faith is often merely their decision.”

Waters also shares similar concerns, "American evangelicals often exhibit distrust of institutions and authority, including that of the church". Hofstete’s comparative workplace analyses in *Culture’s Consequences*, also supports the notion that authority is more likely to be challenged in Western cultures with lower power distances as opposed to cultures with a high regard and respect for position, rule and authority.

In my immediate ministry context of Sydney, Australia, I perceive there is little respect for authority both outside and within the church. Beyond the church, political and corporate scandals have tarnished the place of office and authority. There is broad scepticism of structure, hierarchy and order. In practice, church membership and submission to leaders is viewed as optional. There is a flattening of role distinctions and positions, and little desire to view see pastors as church leaders to respect, let alone serving like kings with rule and authority. Hence there is a need to revive our understanding of kinglike rule and what can be expected of elders.

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36 Ibid., 18.


38 In a global study, Hofstede developed several measures to compare and contrast cultural values. He noted that certain cultures (e.g. Africa, South America and Asia) have a high power distance where those in high office, rank and position are afforded respect and honour. Those in low power distance cultures (e.g. Europe, North America and Australia) are more egalitarian and resist the idea of positional authority. This generally translates to greater mistrust, questioning and challenging of leaders such as politicians, employers and community leaders in Geert H. Hofstede, *Culture’s Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*, Abridged ed., Cross-cultural research and methodology series (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1984).

39 As I serve in a multicultural church, it is interesting to note how church members from different background address the pastors. Those from low power distance backgrounds (i.e. Caucasian Australians) tend to address pastors informally by first name, whereas immigrants from high power backgrounds (i.e. Asia, South America) will often address pastors more formally by title.
Tackling Church Leadership Failures

Another reason for resistance to viewing elders like kings, is the public examples of falls from grace, heavy shepherding, autocratic rule and incidents of abuse of the flock.\(^{40}\) Leeman notes “Westerners today have beheld the corpse-strewn battlefield of authority misuses and determined to dispense with authority altogether”.\(^{41}\) It is a sad reality that any Christian who has persisted in any church for significant length of time has probably witnessed poor leadership at best, scandalous at worst.

It is ironic that some of the more recent proponents of the *munus triplex* and especially kinglike rule were involved in the Mars Hill (Acts 29, Resurgence) movement which experienced rapid growth, but then spectacularly came undone.\(^{42}\) Corporate sounding titles such as “Executive pastor” and business methodologies were employed, but behind the scenes it seems that poor leadership and abuse of power may have contributed to the downfall. We do not have time to analyse those particular circumstances, yet it appears that a corporate model of rule and authority was implemented in churches as “kingship”. Such failed models of kingship invite a fresh study on biblical expectations of kingly roles in a church’s eldership.

**Under emphasis of kingship in pastoral training**

Finally, seminaries may be contributing to an unbalanced view of ministry by the courses offered and the curriculum developed. In most seminaries, there is a healthy recognition of prophetic and priestly aspects of ministry as can be seen in the homiletic

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\(^{41}\) Leeman, “Authority: God’s Good and Dangerous Gift,” 12.

and pastoral care subjects often offered as core components of ministry training. Students are encouraged to study original languages, biblical and systematic studies, along with several preaching laboratories to ensure that they are equipped to rightly handle and proclaim the Word of God. Furthermore, students are often trained in pastoral care through counselling, chaplaincy and worship, to prepare them for priest like roles.

However, kinglike leadership functions such as stewardship and organisational administration courses are relatively underemphasised as compared to more priestly and prophetic roles of a pastor. Greater attention to seminary training in the area of kingship leadership may not only complement and balance prophetic and priestly functions of pastors, but they may also serve to avert some of the excesses and abuses observed in examples such as Mars Hill. A poorly implemented kingship model of executive leadership adopted from the world may be as damaging to the cause of Christ as failure to adopt kingship models at all.

In conclusion, it is the position of this paper that kingship should be studied further, to counter the prevailing resistance to authority and inherent individualism in western culture. Biblical Christianity encourages the laying aside of personal preference for mutual submission, and if faithfully reflected, points to the power of the gospel to transform cultures within churches. A right understanding of kingship and authority, should also limit public scandal in pastoral ministry by minimizing over reach when

43 A limited sample survey of Master of Divinity curriculums suggested that whilst there were specific courses aimed at leadership/polity (which I have equated to studies on kingship), these were relatively minor (< 5%) at 3-4 hours out of a total 98-111 credit hours. Curriculums sampled were from Reformed Theological Seminary, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Westminster Theological Seminary and The Masters Seminary. See websites for each Seminary for curriculum details.

44 Concerns about groups such as Mars Hill misusing authority and business like methodologies should encourage a greater understanding of how Scripture informs organisational and especially church administration. A cursory observation suggests that worldly business practices were simply applied to church polity, rather than developing sound organisational practices from biblical principles. Seminaries have the opportunity to help future pastors avoid some of the mistakes of Mars Hill by emphasising training in good governance and management of churches by developing courses driven by biblical principles and guided learnings from biblical kingship.
dealing with power and authority. Finally, fresh appreciation and emphasis on kingship in biblical leadership will provide a more balanced framework for future gospel leaders.
CHAPTER 2

KINGSHIP IN THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

The purpose of this chapter is to better understand God’s purpose of kingship in Scripture, explain the rationale for exploring kinglike functions in the Pastoral Epistles, and review several themes of kinship outlined by Paul to Timothy, Titus and future church leaders.

Biblical Kingship

In Chapter 1, kingship in the context of the *munus triplex* was briefly introduced. To further support this thesis, it is prudent to look more closely at Scripture to assist our understanding of the relationship between biblical kingship and elders. In this section, we shall see that God is the ultimate King, that human kingship was appointed by God to reflect His rule and dominion, mankind fails at kingship when he deviates from God’s word and Christ restores kingly rule in his mediatorial work.¹

God as King

*To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God,*

*be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Tim. 1:17)*

The Scripture points to God as the King of the ages, who reigns forever and ever (Exod. 15:18, Ps. 145:13, Dan. 4:3). God exercises rule and dominion over creation, all the nations and especially His people (Ps. 47, Isa. 33:22). He leads in battle to defeat His

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¹ This review of kingship is relatively brief given spaces constraints. For a more detailed Biblical theology of kingship, please refer to chapters 6-8 in Belcher, *Prophet, Priest, and King.*
enemies, to rescue and defend his people. He sits upon His throne and loves justice, establishes equity and righteousness (Ps. 99:1-5).

God’s rule is the perfect example of kingship. It is absolute in authority. It is far reaching in scope. God’s rule and authority goes against the wisdom of the world which suggests that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. This may be true of humanity, but not true of a God who is holy, just and good. God’s exercise of kingly rule and dominion is altogether good. Absolute power in the hands of a gracious and good God is a blessing to all His subjects. We shall briefly see God’s kingship and rule exercised in creation and also in the outworking of providence.

Kingship in Creation

God exercise His sovereign kingship in his creative decree (Gen. 1). After creating the heavens, the earth and all the living creature contained therein, God creates man in His image. As image bearers of God, kingly rule was expected of all humanity from the very beginning of creation (Gen. 1:26-28). God creates mankind so that he might faithfully exercise dominion over creation. This kingly function exercised by humanity in the context of creation should be reflective of God’s kingly rule as Creator.

However, Adam fails as a king by disobeying God, the ultimate King. This is evident in his rejection of God’s word and his exercise of autonomous self rule (Gen. 3). The fall plunges all of humanity into judgement and all attempts of ruling on the earth will now be forever frustrated by sin. Genesis 3 also foreshadows the choice set before all human kings. Will they demonstrate faithfulness by obeying God’s word or succumb to temptation and depart from God’s revealed will?

Kingship in Israel

\[^2\] Ibid. 105
Throughout the Pentateuch we see God graciously call and bless Abraham so that he and his posterity become a great nation. The great King providentially rescues and leads the people from Egypt, dictates His laws, provides land and blesses His people with His royal presence. Despite all this, the people will be a stiff necked people and reject God at many turns. In a desperate time with external threats and inward decay, the people reject God as King in 1 Sam. 8. The people foolishly prefer a king like those from other nations.

At this point, it is important to remember the creation expectation of kingship from Gen. 1 and also passages such as Deut. 17:14-20. These passages reinforce that God’s plan for humanity was to establish human kingship over His people. Kingship may be abused by sinful human beings, but it is still part of God’s good plan. Kings and all those in authority are to be respected and honoured, as they are placed as God’s representatives on earth (Rom. 13:1-5).

Nevertheless, whether it is Adam or Saul, all human kings would fail by departing from God’s word. Even the great kings of Israel such as David and Solomon will deviate from God’s word. There is a frustrating sense that all forms of human government will be tarnished by sin and eventually fail. Nevertheless, God’s plans for kingship, structure, order and authority is good and right.

Kingship Restored by Christ

Perfect kingship will not be experienced by humanity until the coming of Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15, Rev. 19:16). Christ as the second person of the Godhead displays all the kingly attributes of YHWH in the Old Testament as previously discussed. However, at the incarnation Jesus also takes on full humanity
and became the God-Man, two distinct natures and one person forever.³ In His humanity, Christ is able to bear upon His shoulders the weight of government (Isa. 9:6). Where Adam and all other kings failed before Him, Christ will prevail and overcome.

Christ overcomes temptation and resists the evil one (Matt. 4:1-11, Luke 4). By his miracles, Jesus will demonstrate His ability to deliver from enemies such as hunger, sickness and demons (Matt. 11:15, 14:13-21). But His greatest victory will be over sin and death, and celebrated by His glorious resurrection. He is exalted as King as His work delivers and defends His people from their greatest enemy.

Christ restores a proper understanding of kingship in His exercise and rule. He uses His rule and authority to serve His people, rather than lord it over them. He is a servant-king. He shall establish His kingdom on earth, govern and lead His people to victory. Jesus shall rule with equity, justice and mercy. Jesus is the ultimate King, perfect in all His rule. He will demonstrate how right rule and authority should be exercised.

**Kingship in the Church**

In His kingship, Christ gives the Apostles the keys to His kingdom (Matt. 16:17-19). We do not have space to discuss the full meaning of this passage, but Waters observes, “Christ has expressly entrusted authority to his apostles to order the life of the people of God under the New Testament”.⁴ Entrusting kingly authority is further reinforced by risen Jesus in the giving of the great commission, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching

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³ Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q. 21 Who is the Redeemer of God’s elect? A. The only Redeemer of God's elect, is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, for ever.

⁴ Waters, How Jesus Runs the Church, 39.
them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matt. 28:18-20).”

We see Jesus acknowledging that He has all authority, but also that He will use that rule to commission future church leaders. He vests authority in them to extend His kingdom rule to the ends of the earth by making disciples of all nations. Waters observes on Matt. 28 “The commission may have application to the church generally, but the commission belongs particularly to the disciples, and to all those who after them were called to bring the Word of God to the nations. In other words, this commission has primary application to the ministers of the church”.5

As the Apostles received keys to the kingdom and the great commission, it is now helpful to consider how kingship applies to church leaders today. Whilst the Apostolic office was unique and ended with the passing of the twelve, the continuing office of elders carries on the work of building up the church by exercising delegated rule and authority.

According to Belcher, the kingly exercise of leadership by elders includes the following:6

1. Proclamation of Christ’s reign is central to the mission of the church and provides opportunity for others to submit,
2. Engaging in spiritual warfare and defeating Satan,
3. Exercising authority to govern under Christ,
4. Oversight to admit into membership & exercise church discipline, and
5. Protecting against false teachers.

Johnson has also conducted a study of kingship and applied it to church leaders noting it required them:7

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5 Waters, How Jesus Runs the Church, xxv.
6 Belcher, Prophet, Priest, and King, 175.
1. To be a leader
2. To impart a vision
3. To steward resources
4. To lead in battle

Faithful kingship was expected of all humanity at creation and throughout the history of Israel, but king after king failed to live according to the Word of God. It is only in the coming of Jesus Christ, that we are able to see true kingship restored. Jesus uses His kingly authority to commission church leaders to advance and secure the kingdom via the ministry of the Word. God’s order requires kingship to be exercised in all areas of life, especially in the life of the church.

Relevance of the Pastoral Epistles

We now turn our attention to the Pastoral Epistles to see if kingly themes are evident in Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus. The central rationale for exploring kingship themes and motifs in the Pastoral Epistles is that these letters were specifically written to, “those with pastoral responsibility and with the task of appointing pastors”.8 The Pastoral Epistles shed more light on the role and qualification of elders and also ecclesiastical organisation than any other work in the New Testament.9 If kingship functions are required in church leaders, it should be clearly evident in Paul’s writings to Timothy and Titus.10


To support our approach, it is also helpful to note others have used the Pastoral Epistles as a basis for leadership studies.\textsuperscript{11} However, in my survey of the literature none of these other studies seem to focus on kingship as a model for leadership within Paul’s letters to Timothy or Titus. It is interesting to note that Hiebert conducted an extensive study in the Pastoral Epistles focused on 2 Tim. 2. Whilst Hiebert identified at least seven pictures of leadership including a teacher, a soldier, an athlete, a farmer, a workman, a vessel, and a slave, he did not identify kingship as a leadership theme.\textsuperscript{12}

Finally, the Pastoral Epistles provide sufficient scope for the study of kingship as it addresses two different church contexts (Crete and Ephesus) and two different church leaders (Titus and Timothy). The Pastoral Epistles provide reasonable limits given the space constraints of this paper. Whilst other Scripture will be referred to, it will be done sparingly and only in a way to support the evident themes contained in the Pastoral Epistles.

We will first explore whether there are kingly motifs, exhortations and language employed by Paul. Furthermore, we will see if there is evidence of kingly expectations of elders in their qualifications or responsibilities.

**Kingly Themes Identified**

The themes of kingship, authority and rule identified in the Pastoral Epistles begin with Christ being exalted and worshipped as King. We will then see the authority and rule of King Jesus exercised in the appointment of Paul. The Apostle will reinforce


\textsuperscript{12} Hiebert, “Pauline Images of a Christian Leader.”
the theme of kingship as he exercises the authority given to him by Christ, to personally charge Timothy and Titus. These men will then be expected to establish kingly rule in churches by appointing elders. In the qualification and the function of elders, kingly functions will also be evident as elders are called to exercise rule and authority.

**Christ’s Kingship in the Pastoral Epistles**

Whilst each office of the *munus triplex* is present in the Pastoral Epistles, it is the kingship of Christ which appears to be emphasized by Paul. Christ’s priestly role as mediator (1 Tim. 2:5-6, Titus 2:14) and his prophetic ministry of the word (Titus 1:2) are clearly evident. But as we shall see, it is the theme of Christ’s kingship which dominates the Pastoral Epistles.

Christ’s kingship is found in several doxologies where His eternal reign and rule over human authority is on display. The emphasis of Christ’s reign as absolute and ultimate, reminds us that any rule by church leaders must be in submission to Christ. Paul’s acknowledgment of Jesus as king provides a clear example, motivation but also sets limits for both Titus and Timothy as they are called to exercise king like rule.

Examples of praise to God and Christ the King include:

- *To the King of the ages*, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever (1 Tim. 1:17)\(^\text{13}\)
- …he who is the blessed and *only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords*, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. (1 Tim. 6:15-16, cf. Rev. 17:14, 19:16)\(^\text{14}\)

Paul also speaks of personally receiving mercy rather than judgement in 1 Timothy which reminds us of the kingly authority of Christ (1 Tim. 1:12-14). Justice is

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\(^{14}\) For more detailed discussion, see Hendriksen, *I & II Thessalonians; I & II Timothy & Titus*, 207. and Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 420–22.
more appropriately administered or mercy given by a king, rather than prophets or priests.

Christ’s kingly reign is also highlighted in His battle and ultimate victory over the great enemy of death in 2 Tim. 1:10 where Paul writes, “And which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel”. The destruction of death is a great display of Christ’s kingly rule, power and might that applies to this life and into eternity (cf. 1 Cor. 15:26).  

Paul’s confidence in King Jesus’ ability to rescue, deliver and guard his people are also evident:

- … But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me (2 Tim. 1:12)
- which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me (2 Tim. 3:11b)
- The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever (2 Tim. 4:18)

These specific works of Jesus are reflective of His role as a triumphant king advancing his kingdom and defending his people. We shall soon see these attributes reflected in elders and their pastoral ministry.

Christ’s kingly role is further highlighted as it is linked to the royal Davidic lineage when Paul writes, “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel” (2 Tim. 2:8). This reference is especially helpful when we recall the covenant established with David where God promises to raise up a future king from David’s seed who will establish an everlasting kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12-13, 1

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Chron. 17:11-14, Matt. 21:9, c.f. 2 Tim. 4:1 “kingdom” of Christ). Jesus Christ is the royal seed, “David’s glorious Antitype” who now sits on the eternal throne.16

Finally, there are promises that if one endures with Christ, “we will also reign with him” (2 Tim. 2:12) thereby reflecting the restoration of God’s original plan that humanity would eventually experience true kingship and dominion. This ruling and reigning is only through union with the King of kings.

In summary, these references demonstrate the kingship of Christ is present in the Pastoral Epistles in doxologies, reflected in Christ’s waging spiritual warfare and being victorious. Christ as the absolute King of kings, rules over every earthly authority. As the eternal king, His reign has no end. Acting for the good of His people, Christ the King is able to defend His people from the great enemy of sin and death through his saving work on the cross. The references to Christ fulfilling the Davidic covenant and His people being promised a share in a future reign with King Jesus also support the theme of kingship in the Pastoral Epistles. Taken together, Paul reminds Timothy and Titus that the absolute, eternal and promised example of kingly leadership is Jesus Christ.

King Jesus Appoints Paul who in turn, Exhorts Timothy and Titus

A king has the authority to appoint and commission subjects to undertake duties or to fulfil specific roles. Furthering the theme of kingship in the Pastoral Epistles, we observe the Apostle Paul responding to the royal authority of Jesus, “I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service” (1 Tim. 1:12) and “For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle” (1 Tim. 2:7, 2 Tim. 1:11). The language utilised by Paul for his apostolic

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16 Hendriksen, I & II Thessalonians ; I & II Timothy & Titus, 250. notes “It is as the rightful, spiritual heir of David, David’s glorious Antitype, that he sits enthroned at the Father’s right hand”
appointment reinforces the sovereign authority of Jesus.\(^\text{17}\) The call and commission of Paul is also reminiscent of the giving of keys (Matt. 16:18-19) and the great commission (Matt. 28:18-20).

The Apostle then reinforces the kingly language by echoing Jesus’ commission and call to Titus and Timothy. Whilst all church leaders are ultimately commissioned by the appointment of Christ the King of kings, Paul’s personal charge and exhortation utilises language that reflects his personal authority as an Apostle.\(^\text{18}\) This Apostolic authority has been received from Christ and is rightly exercised by Paul in a kinglike manner as demonstrated below;\(^\text{19}\)

- *I charge you* in the presence of God …. to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:13-15).
- *I charge you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching (2 Tim. 4:1-2).
- *This charge I entrust to you*, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare (1 Tim. 1:18).

Paul’s expectations of Titus and Timothy is that they will respond positively to the charge he issues with kinglike authority. This will include waging war like a king, preaching and managing the church. In addition to this, the response also involves

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\(^\text{17}\) The same word τίθηµι is used in 1Cor12:28 where God sovereignly appoints in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administering, and various kinds of tongues.

\(^\text{18}\) Various words have been used by Paul and translated as “charge” such as παραγγέλλω which means command, give orders, charge, summon (1Tim. 1:3, 6:13, 17), παραγγελία means command, provide instruction (1 Tim. 1:5, 18), and διαμαρτύρομαι means warn, testify solemnly, call to witness against (1 Tim. 5:21, 2 Tim. 2:14, 2 Tim. 4:1). Taken together, these words can be viewed as reflecting kingly authority.

\(^\text{19}\) The language of kingly charge by the Apostle is further supported in Titus 1:5, 1 Tim. 4:11-14, 5:21-22 and 2 Tim. 1:8.
Timothy and Titus appointing leaders, and likewise charging them with a similar kingly authority. “This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you” (Titus 1:5).

A royal pattern of inter generational imitation is now established where Jesus the King of kings appoints the Apostle Paul, who in turn reflects kingly rule by exhorting Timothy and Titus. The young church leaders in turn, are to exercise kingly authority by appointing and future church leaders (1 Tim. 1:3, 6:17, Titus 1:5-9).

*Qualifications of Elders reflects Qualifications for Kings (Deut. 17)*

We now move to more specific kingly motifs as found in the qualifications outlined for church elders. The qualifications for elders have been discussed extensively in various works, so it is not my purpose to address every aspect here.\(^{20}\) For the purpose of this section, I shall limit the discussion to explore parallels of elder qualifications and the kingly qualifications found in Deut. 17:14-20 which were given to Israel in anticipation of the coming kingship. If elders are to function as kings, there should be similarities between Deut. 17 and qualifications for church officers in the Pastoral Epistles. Kingly requirements from Deut. 17 include:

1. The king was to be chosen from amongst the brethren and not a foreigner (17:15)
2. The king was not to acquire many horses (17:16)
3. The king was not to acquire excess silver or gold (17:17)
4. The king was not to acquire many wives (17:17)

5. The king shall write a copy of the law, read it all the days of his life (17:18-19)

We first observe that a king is to be from the people and not a foreigner (Deut. 17:15). A king has a representative role for the nation and brethren, but in the process of choosing a king, it is important that the people know a potential leader’s character and capabilities. Paul’s exhortation to Timothy (1 Tim. 3:1-7, 2 Tim. 2:24-26) and Titus (Titus 1:5-9) presuppose that candidates for the eldership are sufficiently well known to evaluate their character according to biblical qualifications.

The requirement that an elder must not be a recent convert (1 Tim. 1:6), means he is not only to be chosen from the brethren, but that he is also a proven, established and mature brother. The elder must also be known well enough to be above reproach (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:6) and to have a good reputation not only within the community of God, but also to those on the outside (1 Tim. 3:7). Elders are chosen from amongst the brethren and not foreigners or strangers (cf. Deut. 17:15).

A king is also not to acquire many horses or excess silver of gold (Deut. 17:16-17). In the original context, the warning regarding horses was a caution against military build up. Such acquisitions might promote self confidence and less reliance upon God by the king. Likewise, amassing a personal fortune can be indicative of greed or hedonistic self indulgence.21 Both kingly requirements are mirrored in an elder not being a lover of money (1 Tim 3:3) or greedy for gain (Tit 1:8).22 Godly rulers are to find contentment, security and satisfaction in God. They are not to hoard material possessions or riches, lest their hearts drift from serving God.

21 Belcher, Prophet, Priest, and King, 114.

22 1 Tim. 6:10a “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils...” is applicable to all believers, but also reinforces warnings against material accumulation from 1 Tim. 3:3
Kings of Israel were not to have many wives. This was probably due to various reasons including the use of marriage in ancient times to forge political allegiances with other nations.\(^\text{23}\) Solomon is an example of a king who failed to heed God’s word which led to kingdom demise (1 Kings 11:3-4). It is interesting to note that in church leadership, a parallel exists in that an elder must be a man of one wife (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:6). This emphasis on simple faithfulness (rather than issues of divorce, remarriage etc.), is an interesting parallel.\(^\text{24}\)

The final requirement in Deut. 17 is that a king was to rely on the word of God. Kings were required to make a copy of Scripture and read it all the days of His life. This reminds us of the failure of Adam the first king who strayed from God’s word and contrasts with our great King Jesus who relied on God’s word. Elders must likewise be men of God’s Word. An elder, “must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9). Timothy is also reminded that elders are required to be able to teach the Word of God (1 Tim. 3:2, 2 Tim. 2:24). We shall reflect more on the role of Scripture in an elder’s life as it pertains to advancing the kingdom, but for the moment, it is clear that kings and church elders must both be grounded in the Word of God.

In summary, God’s expectations of a king from Deut. 17 centre on faithfulness, warnings against self reliance, selfish gain and the need for the centrality of God’s Word in the king’s life. Whilst there are a number of other character qualifications found in the Pastoral Epistles for elders, the requirements for kings from Deut. 17 are also reflected in


\(^\text{24}\) There are various interpretations of the requirements of 1 Tim. 3:2. Common views include the requirement to be presently married, only having one wife in a lifetime, avoiding divorce and simple faithfulness to one’s wife. I concur with the final emphasis of a character of faithfulness as discussed by Ed Glasscock, “The Husband of One Wife’ Requirement in 1 Timothy 3:2,” *Bibliotheca sacra* 140 (1983): 244–258.
the qualifications for elders in the New Testament church. In part, this supports the thesis that elders are to reflect kingly attributes and characteristics.

*Rule and Authority of Elders reflects Kingship*

“Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching” (1 Tim. 5:17).

A key function of a kingship is ruling by exercising authority and managing the affairs of a kingdom well.25 Kings of earthly nations must effectively manage relations with allies and enemies beyond the nation’s borders, but a king must also lead in such a way that promotes peace and unity within the kingdom. In the Pastoral Epistles, we shall clearly see that Paul expects elders to exercise authority and effectively manage the life of the church which is a reflection of their kingly function.

As we begin our discussion of elders ruling and exercising authority, it is important to recognise that some may feel uncomfortable about the subject of rule and submission. This may be due to the public examples of abuse of power observed throughout history, or perhaps through personal experience in the workplace, family and public life where authority has been misused. Unfortunately, the church has not been immune from such abuse and there are those who are wary or sceptical of the idea of elders ruling with authority and the need for corresponding submission.

It is reassuring that Scripture is also concerned at the misuse of power and authority (Luke 22:25, 1 Pet. 5:1-3, Ezek. 34). Given the potential for abuse of authority and rule, I shall discuss limits to rule and scope of authority in the next section. In the meantime, we will review how men must demonstrate faithful rule at home prior to ruling as elders in the church. We shall also see that there is a corresponding duty for church members to submit, honour and obey elders, which supports the elder’s role as

rulers. Finally, we observe that biblical rule and authority is not used to serve self as is often seen in the world, but to be used to serve the people of God.

Ruling Well Begins with Home Management

Paul uses προϊστήμι twice in the biblical qualifications for elders found in 1Tim3:4-5 which is translated as manage by the ESV. “He must manage (προϊστάμενον) his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage (προστῆναι) his own household, how will he care for God's church?” (1Tim3:4-5).

According to Scripture, the first environment to observe the effectiveness of a leader’s ability to rule well is in the domestic sphere of the family.26 The challenging environment of family life, with competing priorities, limited resources and complex relationships to manage, is the first theatre in which faithful leadership character is tested, honed and forged. As all men are to rule their homes well, elders must be able to serve as models to others about godly domestic rule. Furthermore, experience in the home prepares them for future challenges in the life of the church.

Men who rule well will earn respect and submission from those under their care (1 Tim. 3:4, cf. Titus 1:6). Upon appointment to the eldership, a man must then be able to lead in such a way as to earn the respect and submission of the people of God under their particular care.27 Opportunities to rule or manage the church of God is conditional on the proven ability of a man to exercise the kingly function in their domestic sphere of influence.

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26 Beeke, How Should Men Lead Their Families?

Men who are able to exercise exemplary leadership in the home are potentially suited for leadership in the wider church, subject to other biblical qualifications being met. If one can not manage the lesser talent of home affairs, it is unwise to give them responsibility of the greater kingdom talent of the household of God.  

Elder Rule Requires Submission: Respect, Obedience and Honour

Submission to the rule of elders is an unpopular idea in western churches, but it is impossible to miss when one considers the following Scripture. Submission is the corresponding response to godly rule.

- We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you (1 Thes. 5:12)
- Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you (Heb. 13:17)
- “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching” (1 Tim. 5:17).

1 Thes. 5:12 calls for respect, esteem and recognition for those who labor among the church in Thessalonica. This refers to ministers of God’s Word performing spiritual labor (explaining the gospel, applying it to concrete situations, warnings, admonishing, helping, encouraging). Furthermore, those who labor are προϊστημι (over) the church which again carries the idea of managing or acting as superintendent over the people. Elders are also called to admonish the people to obey God’s commands.

Heb. 13 calls upon church members to πείθω (obey and trust) and ὑπείκω (submit and yield) to leaders. Why? Elders are responsible for the souls of those that are under their care and will give an account to God. This reminds us of the solemn responsibility

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28 It is concerning to see the focus of interviews for church leadership positions focus on gifts and talents such as preaching and teaching, whilst little attention is given to a man’s family life and how his household is managed. A theological degree and the ability to preach is no substitute for managing a home well.

29 Hendriksen, I & II Thessalonians ; I & II Timothy & Titus, 134.
of elders which should not be taken lightly. Elders are called to lead the people by ruling well, and these passages remind us that this requires the cooperation of the people through submission. There is no place for worldly individualism and loners in the life of the church. A lack of cooperation may make life difficult for elders, but the writer to the Hebrews reminds individuals that it is of no advantage to the uncooperative member either.

The general idea of submission to rule and order is further evident throughout the Pastoral Epistles in various aspects of life. This includes wives submitting to husbands (Titus 2:5), bondservants to masters (Titus 2:9) and general submission to rulers and authorities (Titus 3:1). God is a god of order and we see that He calls for a pattern of loving rule and submission in family, work and the world. It is inconceivable to think that rule, order and submission is required in every facet of life, but not in the church. Structure, hierarchy and authority is part of God’s plan for his world, and should also be evident in the life of the church.\(^\text{30}\)

The call for respect, obedience and submission reflects the kingly function elders must exercise in their pastoral duties. Whilst elders are not kings, they still deserve respect, honour and obedience from those that are under their care. Submission to elders recognises their God given role, responsibility and the rule they must exercise within the church.

**Ruling Well Uses Authority to Serve Others**

How is an elder to exercise their rule and what does ruling well look like? We’ll now spend a moment considering Paul’s instruction regarding elders who καλῶς

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\(^{30}\) It is also interesting to note Paul’s concern for pagan kings and rulers outside the church in 1Tim2:1-2. Why should prayers be encouraged for all people including kings and those in high positions? When kings rule well, the people of God may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. Ruling well has a central concern for the good of the people, of sacrificial service and a desire to bless and benefit all those under their rule.
προεστώτες in 1Tim. 5:17. 31 On this verse, Knight observes that, “The participial form προεστώτες is used here of one who has been placed before, or at the head of the church, and one who has responsibility in that position to ‘rule, lead, or direct’ and to ‘be concerned for and care for’ the church”.

Marshall makes similar observation in that he notes προϊστήμι is a general term used to denote leadership functions which includes both care for the people and also serving in an authoritative role (1 Thes. 5:12, Rom. 12:8). 32 Mounce highlights the aspect of service in προεστώτες and suggests that there is a “double nuance of leading and serving – servant leadership”. 33

Whilst each commentator affirms the idea that elders are to exercise leadership, authority, rule and direction in 1 Tim. 5:17, ruling well also means that they are driven by a concern and care for the church. Authority and rule are to be used to serve and

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31 1 Tim. 5:17 has generated much discussion. Commentators such as Marshall, Knight, Mounce, Hendrickson and Towner identify several points of contention including (1) the identity of the “elders” (whether they are simply older men of the congregation, a collective title for all in church leadership, full time ministers and/or lay leaders), (2) various views regarding what it means to “honour” these elders (respect, honour, financial support), and (3) whether there are specific sub “categories” of elders (teaching and ruling). A detailed response to these issues is beyond the scope of this paper. I concur with Towner’s assessment “Too much is made of possible distinctions, and the more crucial elements are fairly visible” (p.361). For the purpose of this paper, I shall simply address the elements more directly connected to this thesis.

In this passage, I firstly take “elders” to mean formal church leaders (rather than older men) who fulfil the biblical qualifications required in 1Tim. 3, Titus 1. As Mappe has previously identified, elder is interchangeable with bishop/overseer and pastors/shepherd. Secondly, I take “honour” to mean monetary support for an elder’s labor, in a similar way needy widows were to be supported financially (c.f. 1 Tim. 5:3-16). Thirdly, as all elders must be able to manage/rule their own household well and also be able to teach, I see no reason why all elders are not in fact actually ruling and teaching. There may be differences between the amount of time or opportunity given to each individual elder to devote to each activity, but I believe it may be unhelpful or misleading to provide specific elders, as ruling and others teaching. All elders must rule and all must also teach. In fact, ruling well can not be achieved unless it also involves teaching as we shall see in Chapter 3.

32 Marshall and Towner, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, 611.

minister to God’s people. The priority to serve leaves no room for heavy handed and authoritarian abuse of power.

A right use of authority glorifies God and blesses the people. As we have seen earlier, authority can be exercised to command, direct, charge, appoint and commission gospel workers. It was Christ’s kingly authority that compelled Paul, Titus and Timothy in the Pastoral Epistles, and also all disciples to go into all the world (Matt. 28:18-20).

Royal rule can also encourage those who are timid, flagging or weak. Authority can also be used to correct, protect and rebuke: “Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you” (Titus 2:15).

If elders do not have authority, they can not fulfil their ministry of doing good. They can not organise the household of God, nor can they provide the protection necessary against enemies of the gospel. Authority is needed if good works are to be achieved in the life of the church. The key problem with abuse of authority is not authority itself, but rather the ungodly character of those behind the abuse of power.

Ultimately, an elder’s exercise of rule and authority is to reflect the person and work of Christ who is the King of kings. Elders do not have inherent authority in themselves, but rather exercise an authority that has been delegated to them by Christ. Elders are vice regents, under kings, ambassadors of Christ on earth. To that end, elders will use their God assigned rule and authority to serve the people of God, as Christ served the people of God. He served with love, grace and mercy. Christ served sacrificially, putting the needs of the people before His own. Elders will do well, if they rule with Christ's priorities and attitude in mind.
Scope and Limits to Rule and Authority

As discussed earlier, God is the ultimate King with unlimited rule and authority. He is absolutely sovereign over all creation, providence and His people. Given God’s perfectly good and holy character, His absolute rule and sovereignty brings comfort, confidence and certainty. Furthermore if God alone is absolutely sovereign, all other authority must be limited in scope and application. In this section, we shall see that whilst elders are appointed to rule and exercise authority, their right to rule is not absolute or ultimate. Christ is the exclusive head and King over His people.

A biblical understanding of the scope and limits of an elder’s authority should serve to minimise abuse in the life of the church. As discussed earlier, all exercise of rule by fallen humanity has the potential for misapplication due to sin. In His wisdom, God has established checks and balances to authority exercised by mankind. We shall see that elders have three lines of accountability (1) to God and His Word, (2) to other elders and (3) to the congregation over which they rule.

Accountability to God and His Word

All authority established in church is divinely given by God. The right to govern does not find its source in humanity i.e. not an elder, a group of elders, nor does it reside in a congregation granting such rights to elders. Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords. No individual Christian or collective of believers can legitimately arrange themselves into a church apart from the divine appointment of God. In practical terms,

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34 Contrast this with the concerns one might have if a sinful human being had total sovereignty.

35 See Chapter 26, para 4, 8 & 9 of Second London Baptist Confession of Faith and Chapter 6, para 6 of Westminster Confession of Faith. These affirm that Christ alone is the Head of the Church.

36 Waters provides a helpful discussion on the source of authority in church government. I concur with his assessment that the right to govern in the church is not found in human right (jure humano) but by divine right (jure divino). See discussion pp.41-47. Waters, How Jesus Runs the Church.
this means that church government is determined by principles of Scripture.\(^{37}\) The centrality of God’s word in the government of God’s people can be seen clearly in both the Old and New Testaments.

We saw earlier that Israel’s kings were to make a copy of the Law of God. It was to be their rule of life and constitution for the kingdom.\(^{38}\) The Law of God was a daily reminder of their appointment under God, that authority was limited and that kingly rule was to be used for the glory of God and the benefit of the people. Similarly, church leaders are to be reliant on God’s Word. In the Pastoral Epistles, we see that an elder “must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it” (Titus1:9). Likewise, Timothy is to be grounded and able to teach the Word of God (1 Tim. 3:2, 2 Tim. 2:24).

Furthermore, elders are reminded about the seriousness of the call to ministry and their ultimate accountability to God (Heb. 13:17). Likewise, aspiring elders ought to recall James’ warning: “Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly” (James 3:1). Elders will be held to greater account as they have been entrusted with greater responsibility (Luke 12:48). Such exhortations and warnings should humble an elder and guide them to a right use of kingly authority.

The biblical qualifications for elders also serves as a tangible checklist for accountability. It is not only for those seeking initial appointment but also for all who continue to serve in leadership. Over time, elders should mature in their humility, self

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 43.

\(^{38}\) Belcher, *Prophet, Priest, and King*, 112. “The Law of God was the standard by which the nation and her leaders, including the king, would be judged”
control, gentleness, kindness, patience, holiness, self discipline and their love for good (1 Tim. 3:1-2, 2 Tim2. :24, Titus 1:5-9). Elders should also grow in their likeness of Christ by imitating His kingly rule, by serving His people (Mark 10:45, Luke 22:24-30). Authority exercised by elders that is reflective of God’s character and rule and will be a blessing to the people, not a burden. Ruling well is not exercising autocratic rule and issuing orders like a despot. It is not lording it over the flock or being heavy handed. Elders are to rule and exercise authority by being servant-kings.

Accountability to Other Elders (Plurality and Parity)

Belcher notes that kings of Israel were not the exclusive authority over God’s people, but shared their authority with other offices such as priests, prophets and judges.\(^{39}\) When the king of Israel deviated from God’s word, others such as prophets would rebuke and challenge the king to return to God (2 Sam. 12, 1 Kings 18). Kings had authority to rule the kingdom, but exercise of rule was always subject to God’s Law. To assist a king rule well, God raised up other leaders to keep kings accountable.

In the New Testament, churches were established with a plurality of elders. Whilst a new church plant might initially have a single elder, the norm appears to be multiple men serving concurrently to lead the people in each church (Acts 14:23, 20:17, 28-30, Titus 1:5).\(^{40}\) If Old Testament kings had prophets and other leaders holding them accountable, we now see multiple elders being commended and established to watch over the people and also each other.\(^{41}\)

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 113. In the context of kingship outlined in Dt17:14-20, it is helpful to remember that other leadership functions are also described such as judges and priests 16-18, and prophets 18:15-22


\(^{41}\) If wicked prophets, priests and kings can arise in the Old Testament, we should not be surprised that elders can repeat the pattern in the New Testament. Paul warns the Ephesian elders that from amongst their own number wolves would arise to draw people away (Acts20:28-30).
A plurality of elders shares authority amongst several men, rather than concentrating authority in one individual. Elders can sharpen another, brings different perspectives when considering complex matters and hold each other accountable. A plurality of elders also promotes humility as there is an ongoing need for mutual submission. No one elder is ever ultimate in their rule. With concerns of abuse of power, multiple men serving together act as checks and balances to misuse or abuse authority. If one elder goes astray, others can come alongside to restore or challenge (Prov. 27:6, Gal. 6:1).

For a plurality of elders to function biblically, there must also be parity and equality of authority. We see a practical example of equal authority when Paul challenges Peter in Galatians regarding behaviour that compromised the gospel (Gal. 2:11-14). There is evident parity of authority amongst the Apostles. In further support of equality amongst elders, Peter’s appeal to fellow elders demonstrates humility and parity (1 Pet. 5:1). A similar pattern of mutual submission and accountability should be expected amongst elder peers who truly view each other as equals.

Across the wider Church, there are different views on the place of plurality and parity. It is not my intention to discuss at length the strengths and weakness of various forms of church polity. However, in the context of elder accountability, it would seem that denominational structures and traditions that do not encourage plurality and parity of

42 For a more detailed discussion on parity, please see Samuel E Waldron et al., In Defense of Parity: A Presentation of the Parity or Equality of Elders in the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Truth for Eternity Ministries, 1997).

43 There is no sense that either Apostle pulls rank over the other, regarding who had greater authority. It is interesting to see how Peter addresses elders in 1Pet5:1, not as an Apostle but simply as a fellow elder.

eldership have more potential for the rise of autocratic rule, given there may be less checks and balances.

An Example Lacking Plurality

In my local ministry environment of Sydney, Australia, the Sydney Anglican Diocese (Episcopalian) centralises rule and authority in a single individual in any given local church.45 There is no evidence of plurality, as there is only ever one ruler appointed to each local parish. This sole elder is given the title Minister or Rector.46 Whilst Episcopalian churches may employ other staff members to minister the gospel to the congregation through teaching and pastoral care, there is only ever one Rector (elder).

Other staff members are accountable to the Rector, but the Rector is only accountable to an external overseeing bishop.47 There is no higher authority within the local church than the Rector. Whilst there may be historic reasons behind such hierarchical structures, in the context of this thesis, the apparent lack of plurality of peer elders in the local church removes an essential biblical accountability measure.

An Example Lacking Parity

Presbyterians have polity which has both stated plurality and parity within the eldership.48 I have no disagreement with the practice of Presbyterian plurality of elders as this is clearly evident, but I do have questions regarding the practical outworking of

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45 This concern relating to plurality also applies to other denominations and polity structures that have a sole elder/minister with no genuine peer accountability. Many Baptist churches have a leadership structure comprised of a sole elder/minister and a deacon board with lesser authority. The concerns noted re Episcopalian are equally applicable to such Baptist churches.

46 Rector is derived from Latin meaning Ruler


48 Knight, “Two Offices (Elders or Bishops and Deacons) and Two Orders of Elders (Preaching or Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders).”
parity within Presbyterian polity.\textsuperscript{49} Presbyterians designate elders as either teaching or ruling. Whilst these differentially titled elders are both required to teach and rule (therefore considered equal or having parity), there are genuine differences between teaching and ruling elders which challenge the notion of parity.

For example, teaching elders encounter a higher level of examination prior to being licensed to preach. Once ordained, a teaching elder is referred to as the Minister and can preach with freedom and administer the sacraments. Ruling elders are also ordained, but they require permission from the teaching elder to preach, and they are not able to administer the sacraments.\textsuperscript{50} With respect to this thesis and the need for peer accountability, there also appears to be different accountability structures for teaching and ruling elders. Teaching elders are accountable to the Presbytery and not the local Session.\textsuperscript{51} By way of contrast, ruling elders are accountable to the local Session.

Whilst there is stated parity in Presbyterian polity, teaching and ruling elders do not appear to have equal authority to preach or administer sacraments. Furthermore, there are differences in accountability structures between teaching and ruling elders. Presbyterian polity certainly has better local safeguards than Episcopalian polity (especially for ruling elders accountable to the local Session), but the differential

\textsuperscript{49} I understand parity to mean equality of office amongst elders, so that elders are equally able (or licensed) to preach, administer the sacraments and are under the same accountability measures. For a more detailed discussion on parity, please see Waldron et al., \textit{In Defense of Parity}.

\textsuperscript{50} Ruling elders are not licensed to preach, unlike teaching elders.

\textsuperscript{51} See section 4.29-4.35 of the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales (PCNSW) Code outlining how Ministers (teaching elders) are accountable compared to 4.36-4.39 for ruling elders. Furthermore, there is a distinction between ruling and teaching elders as to who can administer the sacraments. In short, whilst there is stated intention of equality amongst elders, there are distinct accountability and responsibilities for teaching vs ruling elders. General Assembly, \textit{The Code} (The Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales, 2017), http://pcnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/The-Code-Pt-I-and-II_27-JULY-2017.pdf.
accountability mechanisms suggests whilst parity may be stated, it appears to be more complex in actual practice.

*An example with Parity and Plurality*

In Elder led Congregationalism, plurality of elders and parity of authority provide mutual accountability.\(^{52}\) Whilst there is room for different roles and responsibilities amongst the eldership, all elders are ultimately equal in authority and also accountability.\(^{53}\) All elders are able to preach. Any difference in preaching frequency is simply a function of practical availability. Some elders may take on more teaching responsibility due to their greater teaching gifts and they may also be set apart by the church and remunerated for their labours, but they do not have greater authority than those who teach less frequently.\(^{54}\) All elders are able to administer baptism and the Lord’s Supper. All elders are held to the same accountability mechanisms with each other. In Elder led Congregationalism, there are multiple elders, with the same authority to preach, administer the sacraments and called to mutual submission to each other. This outworking of plurality and parity provide the broadest safeguards against abuse of authority by rogue elders.

**Accountability to the Congregation**

If elders are to rule and exercise authority, is there a place for congregational accountability? In Episcopal polity, the answer is no. Rectors are only accountable to overseeing bishops. In Presbyterian polity, the congregation exercises its authority

\(^{52}\) Waldron et al., *In Defense of Parity*; Rinne, *Church Elders*.

\(^{53}\) In Chapter 26, para 8-11 of *1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, there is no differentiation between elders as teaching or ruling.

\(^{54}\) Leeman writes “The Bible does not make a formal distinction between the lead pastor and the rest of the elders, but instead seems to establish a formal parity (citing Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Tim. 4:14; James 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1).
through appointed elders either in Session or the Presbytery. Water states, “Apart from the election of officers, the exercise of power in the church belongs to the officers of the church. In this sense, it is not shared between the officers and non officers of the church”.\textsuperscript{55} The congregation has no direct role to play other than the original appointment of church officers.

Elder-led Congregational polity is different as authority resides in both the elders and also within the congregation.\textsuperscript{56} In \textit{Don’t Fire Your Congregation}, Leeman writes “Christ gives two distinct and explicit authorizations: one to the whole church and another to its elders. Neither ascends or descends from the other”.\textsuperscript{57} These are not competing, but complementary and ultimately all exercised under God. Elders and the congregation exercise different types of authority much like a company CEO, marketing VP and shareholders exercise different authority within a corporate organisation.\textsuperscript{58} Leeman observes “Congregations exercise authority together with and under the leadership of elders”.\textsuperscript{59}

Constraints within this paper prevent more extensive discussion, but suffice it to say that healthy congregational accountability helps neutralise heavy shepherding and abuse of power by ungodly elders. In 1 Tim. 5:19-20, there is an opportunity for charges to be laid against a wayward elder. There is no sense that charges can only be laid by other elders. Subject to the need for multiple witnesses concurring, it is reasonable to

\textsuperscript{55} Waters quotes Peck with the “people have no share in the government, but only the right of choosing governors” –see footnote 19 in Waters, \textit{How Jesus Runs the Church}, 62–63.

\textsuperscript{56} Congregationalism would see that the congregation has higher authority than the elders, but Elder led Congregationalism see both working together. The elders lead the congregation to exercise rule together.

\textsuperscript{57} Leeman, \textit{Don’t Fire Your Church Members}, 66.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 9.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 67.
expect that ordinary members of the congregation can and must participate in church discipline.  

Furthermore, elders who are found to be guilty are to be rebuked publicly (presumably before the entire congregation), that all may fear. If a congregation can directly recognise the gift of eldership in a man (i.e. appointment to office), then a congregation should have the ability to recognise deviations from biblical qualifications and be able to directly participate in his discipline (i.e. removal from office).

The practice of non church officers (i.e. regular members of a congregation) exercising an element of authority over elders in church discipline is consistent with the idea that all people are to exercise kingship and rule in every aspect of life. This outworking of the original creational ordinance is to be exercised in the home, workplace, public square and also within the church. Elder-led Congregationalism facilitates kingly rule in the church by ordinary church members, under the leadership of the elders.

Mutually Reinforcing Accountability Provide Safeguards

Israel’s kings of old were accountable to God’s Word, prophets and priests. Likewise, elders serving with king like authority in the New Testament have several checks and balances. These accountability measures recognise the reality that all elders are imperfect at best. The presence of multiple and equal fellow elders ensures that peers can come alongside elders who may be tempted to misuse power in the church.

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60 I appreciate that this view contrasts with Presbyterian polity where only other elders administer church discipline on behalf of the church. Leeman makes a strong case for why elders must lead the congregation in disciplinary matters. Developing his argument from Matt. 16:13-19, 18:15-20 and 28:18-20, Leeman observes that the final round of judgement and authority in Matt. 18:15-20 is given to the church. Jesus could have said, tell it to the elders or leaders, but instead, he charges them to tell it to the church (assembly or gathering). Ibid., 98–99.

61 Ibid., 85–122. In this chapter, Leeman explains the ongoing priestly and kingly rule by members of the congregation.
Likewise, members of the congregation have a role in government in the church. If needed, the congregation can also rebuke and admonish elders, and can also participate in church discipline. Taken together, these overlapping accountability structures of God, peers and the congregation seek to minimise the potential for abuse of power.

Despite the potential for abuse, we must not lose sight of God’s expectation that rule and authority will be exercised by fallen people in every sphere of life. Biblical kingship was expected from creation, throughout the history of Israel, and ultimately fulfilled in Christ. The Pastoral Epistles remind us that kingship is exemplified in Christ’s redemptive role and expected in His commissioning of gospel workers. Kingship practices are echoed by Paul as he instructs Timothy and Titus in ordering the household of God. They are to appoint future elders and continue the royal commissioning process.

We have also observed that elders must fulfil Biblical qualifications that resemble Old Testament requirement of kings from Deut. 17. They must exercise kingly authority in a way that encourages respect, honour and submission in those they lead and rule. We were also reminded that biblical kingship is driven by a servant heart which seeks the welfare of the people. Safeguards have also been given to the church so to keep elders accountable. God’s Word, other elders and the congregation work together to ensure that elders exercise their rule and authority in a way that reflects the person and work of Christ.
CHAPTER 3

KINGSHIP FUNCTION OF ELDERS

“O church, arise, and put your armor on;
Hear the call of Christ our captain.
For now the weak can say that they are strong
In the strength that God has given.
With shield of faith and belt of truth,
We’ll stand against the devil’s lies.
An army bold, whose battle cry is love,
Reaching out to those in darkness.¹

In Chapter 2, we demonstrated that kingly expectations of church leaders are evident throughout the Pastoral Epistles. Christ is not only exalted as King of kings, but he also models rule and authority in His appointments in the kingdom. Paul reinforces the royal call to Timothy and Titus with his personal kingly exhortations, requirements for elders to rule well and exercise authority. In this chapter, we specifically explore what ruling well looks like for elders. However, we must first consider the nature of the kingdom that elders exercise kingly rule over.

A Spiritual Kingdom

In the Old Testament, kings of Israel such as David and Solomon exercised rule over a physical kingdom. The kingdom had distinct geographical boundaries and was surrounded by foreign nations. Kings would raise up armies and arm them with weapons for kingdom advance and also kingdom defence. A faithful king of Israel was expected to lead the people in battle and to physically defeat the enemies of God (1 Sam. 17, 2

¹ O Church Arise, Keith and Kristyn Getty, 2006
In times of stability, kings would also be required to administer justice and maintain peace within the kingdom (e.g. Solomon in 1 Kings 3).

In the New Testament, the kingdom emphasis shifts away from physical to spiritual categories (John 18:33-37, Matt. 16:19). Kingdom warfare is still to be waged by elders functioning as kings but the focus moves away from physical combat to spiritual warfare (2 Cor. 10:3-5, Eph. 6:10-20). Paul writes, “This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare” (1 Tim. 1:18). This is not an invitation to take up spears and shields, but to put on the armour of God and take up the Word of God which is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17, John 18:10-11).

Elders are to rule over spiritual kingdoms. Their jurisdiction and domain of administration is discreet local churches. Elders are responsible for specific individuals entrusted to them, and it is these members gathered in local churches that elders must lead in spiritual warfare (Heb. 13:17). The Commander in Chief for the whole elect army of God is Jesus Christ, but elders are called to exercise kinglike leadership within discreet fighting units (i.e. local churches).

We will now explore three aspects of kingly leadership in the spiritual kingdom as it pertains to the local church. We will see that ruling well involves (1) advancing the gospel kingdom, (2) defending the kingdom against enemies and, (3) maintain peace and stability within the kingdom community. Each activity will be mediated by the faithful teaching ministry of elders rightly handling the Word of God.

**Kingdom Advance**

Elders are to focus on the advance the kingdom of God through the preaching of the gospel. We shall see that the ministry of the Word of God is the spiritual weapon used to expand and enlarge the kingdom in the Pastoral Epistles. We shall also see that
elders must grow in their reliance and understanding of God’s Word and also be able to train others to do likewise.

**Preaching and Teaching the Word of God**

Given the spiritual nature of the ensuing battle, kingdom advance in the church will not simply equate to expanding boundaries or amassing land. Kingdom advance in the church will be measured by gospel triumph as the good news of Jesus Christ is proclaimed, people repent and believe. The kingdom of darkness retreats as people are won over by the gospel and are translated into the Kingdom of the Son (Col. 1:13).

An example of triumphant kingdom advance recorded in Scripture is found in the book of Acts. A relatively small company of men start witnessing for Jesus in Jerusalem, then move on to Judea, Samaria and finally to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8, cf. 28:30-31). Kingdom advance is not achieved through use of military force. On the contrary, the church is advanced when the church is attacked and persecuted by others. It is when the church is scattered, that gospel seeds are sown and God gives the increase.

Whilst spiritual warfare is required of all believers, elders will have a unique leadership role in being an example and model to the people of God. Elders lead in spiritual battle like kings of old by taking on the primary responsibility of preaching and teaching the Word of God. We see a direct connection between authority and the teaching of God’s Word in the great commission (Matt. 28:18-20). As elder kings lead in battle, enemies of the gospel eventually surrender to the authority of Jesus by bowing their knee to the King of kings.

Church leaders are to rightly handle the word of God in a similar way to Israel’s king wielding a physical sword faithfully. Physical swords would wound and kill, but the Word of God has a deep penetrative action which not only wounds, but also restores to

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bring new life (Heb. 4:12, Eph. 6:17). A right use of the word of God will bring victory and kingdom advance, whilst neglect or misuse will bring kingdom decline, just like in the physical realm.

We now see the importance of the teaching and preaching of God’s word in the Pastoral Epistles in Paul’s own example, his exhortation of Timothy and Titus, and also the requirement of future church elders.

**Paul models faithful kingship by his own faithful teaching**

Paul declares to Timothy, “For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth” (1 Tim. 2:7, cf. 2Tim. 1:11). Paul’s apostolic commission involves preaching the truth of the gospel. This is also affirmed to Titus where he highlights the importance of God’s word that has been entrusted to him, “and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Saviour” (Titus 1:3).

Paul also sees that his personal example of preaching provides a role model for younger men to follow. We read, “Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 1:13). He repeats this message, “You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me” (2 Tim. 3:10-11). The importance of harmonising sound doctrine with consistent conduct is vital in advancing the kingdom.

We also see the realities of spiritual battle from 2 Tim. 3:10-11. Faithful preaching will draw opposition from the enemy in the form of persecution and suffering, but faithful elders will continue preaching with patience and steadfastness. At times, it
may seem the immediate battle is lost, nevertheless Paul is confident that King Jesus is victorious and is able to rescue him from trouble.

Having wrestled in spiritual warfare through preaching and teaching, Paul can exclaim, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:7). Through Paul’s ministry of the Word, many have come to faith and churches have been planted. There have been triumphs and also set backs, but he has every confidence he will eventually reign with Christ as king (2 Tim. 2:12, 4:18).

Paul now encourages Timothy and Titus to teach and preach

Paul also knows that for the kingdom to expand, others have to be raised up to continue gospel preaching. There is only so much a man can achieve in one lifetime, but if others are raised up there is an opportunity for both geographic and generational advance of the kingdom. Timothy and Titus will carry on spiritual kingdom advance in Ephesus and Crete through preaching and teaching. They will both carry on the work well after Paul is called to glory.

Paul charges Timothy with ministry of the word in the church of Ephesus:³

- **Command and teach** these things. Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. (1 Tim. 4:11-13)

- I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be

³ Note the echoes of Paul’s final words to the elders of Ephesus in Acts: “And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God” (Acts 20:25-28)
ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching (2 Tim. 4:1-2)

- Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved a worker who has no need to be ashamed, *rightly handling the word of truth.* (2 Tim. 2:5)

Paul charges Titus in Crete to exercise kingly rule by faithful teaching and preaching:

- But as for you, *teach what accords with sound doctrine* (Titus 2:1)
- Declare these things; *exhort and rebuke with all authority.* Let no one disregard you (Titus 2:15)

All elders must be able to teach if they are to rule well

Having personally exemplified the importance of advancing the kingdom through preaching and teaching, and called upon Titus and Timothy to do likewise, Paul now gives instructions for a future generation of elders to be appointed.

An essential qualification for elders is their ability to teach (1 Tim. 3:1-2, 2 Tim. 2:24, Titus 1:9). Every other character qualification in these lists are commendable for all believers, but the ability to teach is unique to elders. The parallel qualification of deacons also requires men of proven Christian character, but elders have the added responsibility of teaching.5

- The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, *able to teach* (1 Tim. 3:1-2)
- And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, *able to teach,* patiently enduring evil (2 Tim. 2:24)
- He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may *be able to give instruction in sound doctrine* and also to rebuke those who contradict it (Titus 1:9)

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4 Merkle, “Are the Qualifications for Elders or Overseers Negotiable?”

5 Dever, *The Church,* 51–56. See also Chapter 26 of Second London Baptist Confession of Faith
When we consider the relationship between an elder’s rule, authority and teaching, Leeman helpfully summarises with, “An elder’s authority, first and foremost, lies in teaching”.\(^6\) It is interesting to see this supported by a complementary example in 1 Tim. 2:12 with Paul prohibiting women from teaching and exercising authority over men. In Paul’s mind, teaching and exercising authority go hand in hand.

Whilst many churches have a plurality of elders, some forms of church polity further distinguish between elders by providing titles designating them as either teaching or ruling (as previously discussed in Chapter 2). This goes beyond mere titles, and has a real world practical impact. For example, the Presbyterian Church of NSW exclusively licenses teaching elders (minister) to preach.\(^7\) Ruling elders may be able to teach in other contexts and also preach (subject to a teaching elder’s consent), but they clearly do not have the same preaching rights or responsibilities.\(^8\) If advancing the kingdom involves the ministry of God’s word, and a powerful manifestation of this is through the preaching of God’s Word, it seems unhelpful to limit ruling elders’ access to the pulpit.

A passage often cited to support distinctions between teaching and ruling elders is 1 Tim. 5:17.\(^9\) In this verse there are many debatable points but for the sake of our discussion, much depends on what \(\mu\acute{a}l\i\sigma\tau\alpha\) means? This superlative has been translated

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\(^6\) Leeman, *Don’t Fire Your Church Members*, 135.

\(^7\) According to PCNSW Code 4.30-31, access to the pulpit is the exclusive responsibility of the minister (teaching elder). Furthermore, ruling elders are not permitted to administer the sacraments. Again, this is the exclusive responsibility of ministers. General Assembly, *The Code*.

\(^8\) Given all elders in Presbyterian churches must be able teach (in some context), perhaps it would be better to designate those elders who are licensed to preach as preaching elders, rather than teaching elders, as this seems to be more accurate.

\(^9\) For a comprehensive explanation of Presbyterian view of teaching and ruling elder distinctions, see Knight, “Two Offices (Elders or Bishops and Deacons) and Two Orders of Elders (Preaching or Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders).”
as especially, chiefly, most of all, that is and namely.\(^{10}\) For example Towner suggests it may be a choice between (a) subset of elders who taught, amongst a greater set of elders that ruled well or (b) a contrast of elders who rule well (via teaching) versus those who rule poorly.\(^{11}\) Knight prefers the subset view of elders (i.e. some elders teach).\(^{12}\)

Hendrickson suggests that this verse gives early support for a distinction between elders and ministers even in Paul’s day.\(^{13}\) This latter view, if taken to an extreme can lead to three offices in the church i.e. minister (teaching), lay elders (ruling) and deacons.

To counter a three office view, Knight has helpfully demonstrated that there are only two continuing offices in the church, i.e. elders and deacons.\(^{14}\) He posits, “The reference to a plurality of elders in every church preclude these references from referring only to those who we call ministers or preachers today and clearly include those whom we call ruling, as well as teaching, elders”.\(^{15}\) He further affirms, “All elders are pastors. Among the elders, all of whom have a pastoral and shepherding responsibility, there are

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\(^{11}\) Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 361.

\(^{12}\) Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 232.

\(^{13}\) Hendriksen, *I & II Thessalonians ; I & II Timothy & Titus*, 180. “All rule, and to some extent all teach, but some (in addition to ruling) labour in preaching (expounding the Word to the assembled congregation), and teaching (imparting instruction to the youth, to enquirers, and to all who stand in need of it. They specialize in it, working hard at it”

\(^{14}\) Knight, “Two Offices (Elders or Bishops and Deacons) and Two Orders of Elders (Preaching or Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders),” see also Benjamin L. Merkle, *The Elder and Overseer: One Office in the Early Church*, Studies in biblical literature v. 57 (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2003).

\(^{15}\) Knight, “Two Offices (Elders or Bishops and Deacons) and Two Orders of Elders (Preaching or Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders),” 5.
some who labor in the Word and teaching whom the New Testament calls teachers as here, or as those who preach elsewhere.\textsuperscript{16}

I agree with the statements above regarding the equivalence between ministers, pastors and elders, but do question why Knight goes on to suggests that within the office of pastor/elder, there are two distinct orders i.e. teaching and ruling. Whilst it is vital we recognise that different elders will exercise their teaching gifts in various ways, one should resist the temptation of labelling different elders as having a teaching or ruling function. Providing labels such as teaching or ruling seems to be an overstep, as it unnecessarily pigeon holes elders into one of two boxes and inadvertently encourages a false dichotomy.\textsuperscript{17}

In practice, certain elders by gifting will have more opportunity to labour in the Word. They may be financially supported by the church to preach, teach and rule as their vocation. This does not release other elders from teaching and ruling responsibilities. Other elders (e.g. non vocational, lay, “ruling”) are still called to teach, perhaps in smaller or less formal contexts, but they are equally responsible for oversight of the kingdom of God.

Marshall prefers the translation of μάλιστα as “namely” in 5:17. In this sense, μάλιστα identifies those who lead well with those who teach.\textsuperscript{18} This seems to be more consistent with the expectation that all elders are to teach and all elders are to rule. There

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 10.

\textsuperscript{17} Mounce questions the existence of elders who did not teach “Especially in the light of the Ephesian problem, it seems somewhat contradictory to speak of leaders who did not teach. More likely the leaders of the church were able and active in refuting error and encouraging the truth of the gospel (although this did not necessarily happen only at the corporate level but could have occurred at the personal level)” see Mounce, \textit{Pastoral Epistles}, 307.

\textsuperscript{18} Marshall and Towner, \textit{A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles}, 612.
is no specialisation in either function.\textsuperscript{19} Elders who labor in the word (i.e teaching and preaching) are in fact ruling well, and therefore deserving of double honour (financial and material support)\textsuperscript{20}.

If all elders are to rule with kinglike authority, and if they are to advance the kingdom through spiritual warfare, this has to be mediated by the ministry of God’s Word. This might be public proclamation through preaching, Bible study groups or in private conversation. The forum and the format may differ, but all elders must teach and rightly handle the Word of God. There should be no sense in which elders rule apart from the ministry of God’s Word. Labouring in the ministry of God’s Word aims to see unbelievers saved and also to build up the faith of the saints.

\textit{Personally Growing in the Word of God}

The young shepherd boy David honed his fighting ability by using a sling against lions and bears before being called to slay Goliath. He would then develop his fighting skills further to be able to lead the army of Israel. For leaders to advance any kingdom, there must be growth and progression in the ability to rightly handle weapons of war. For elders of the church, this is God’s Word. The Pastoral Epistles remind elders that they are to personally grow in their knowledge and reliance on the Word of God.

The Apostle Paul had a great religious pedigree and had the benefit of being taught Scripture by the great Gamaliel. Timothy had the privilege of learning Scriptures from a young age (2 Tim. 3:14-15), yet it is unlikely Titus had similar exposure to God’s

\textsuperscript{19} Dever suggests that \textit{μάλιστα} should be translated “I mean” rather than especially. He writes, “Paul did not advocate a separate class of elders who did not teach, but only ruled”, see footnote 57 in Dever, \textit{The Church}, 59.

\textsuperscript{20} The distinction in 1 Tim. 5:17 might be better interpreted as those elders that labour \textit{much} in teaching and preaching (e.g. 50 hour per week), and those that still labour in teaching and preaching, but to a \textit{less}er extent (e.g. 5 hour per week).
word as he was a Gentile. Nevertheless, each man is still expected to teach and preach with kingly authority. They are to grow in their familiarity, understanding and love for Scripture. Paul encourages young Timothy in this way, “If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness” (1 Tim. 4:6, cf. 1 Tim. 4:14b). Like the requirements of kings of old from Deut. 17, elders must personally rely on Scripture:

And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel (Deut. 17:18-20).

Why is the law of God so central in the life of a king? The law of God was the standard by which the nation and her leaders, including the king, would be judged. What is true of Israel’s kings in times past is reflected in the requirements for elders in the church today. Let not many become teachers, for they face a stricter judgement (James 3:1). A helpful parallel to Deut. 17 is found below:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from who you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:14-17)

Apostles, Titus, Timothy and all future elders are to fight the good fight and wage spiritual warfare by proclaiming the gospel and sound doctrine. It is God’s Word that equips the man of God for every good work and therefore an elder must learn to handle

Scripture rightly. They are to grow in love and appreciation for God’s Word, being ready in season and out of season to advance and defend the kingdom.

*Practical Considerations Regarding Advancing the Kingdom*

The preaching of God’s word as a central feature of church leadership is hardly new. The delivery and proclamation of God’s word is most often associated with the prophetic office in the *munis triplex*, rather than kingship. Nevertheless, it is in the context of kingship that we see a closer connection of the ministry of God’s Word with kingdom advance and expansion. As we consider elders leading in spiritual battle like kings of old, we see more fully the importance of a right handling of the Word of God.

Preaching and teaching in the context of kingdom advance, also alerts us to realities which may be underappreciated in other leadership metaphors. For example, preaching may invite persecution, suffering and opposition. Whilst the ministry of God’s Word has the ability to extend and expand the kingdom, the nature of kingdom warfare will also draw opposition from God’s enemies. Elders are to trust God’s Word, not their present circumstances. In the heat of battle for gospel truth, elders are to press on recalling Christ has secured the final victory.

*Kingdom Defence*

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith (2 Tim. 3:1-8)
A second aspect of an elder king’s function is to defend and protect the kingdom. There is little point in extending the kingdom of God on one front and yet lose ground on another due to a lack of defence and protection. Spiritual warfare can be difficult and Paul warns his charges that battles are coming and one needs to be prepared for enemy tactics. Elders need to complement the call to advance the kingdom with a balanced view of defence as well. Both the advance of the kingdom and the defence of the kingdom, will be through the ministry of God’s Word (Titus 1:5-9).

In the Pastoral Epistles we see that there is a call to guard both the gospel and also the people from attacks. This can be attacks from false teachers and also foolish discussions and distractions which discourage and confuse the church. Finally, in their defence of the church, elders are to guard against their own hearts of being provocative and antagonistic in their leadership.

**Elders are to Defend the Gospel and God’s People**

If Israel’s kings were to protect the boundaries of the land and the people contained within, what are elders of the church to defend? Elders are to protect the gospel by guarding against doctrinal deviation. The context of the Pastoral Epistles suggest that spiritual warfare is well and truly underway, especially through false teachers. By safeguarding doctrine, elders are able to protect the spiritual welfare of the people of God.

- As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith (1 Tim. 1:3-4)

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22 Wilson suggests, “New Testament language about elders, shepherds, overseers, teachers, and even leaders is bound up with one key idea: serving the church by protecting her from harm” see Andrew Wilson, “Brothers, We Are Not Managers,” Christianity Today 59, no. 5 (June 2015): 30.

• O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge,” for by professing it some have swerved from the faith (1 Tim. 6:20-21)

• But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some (2 Tim. 2:16-18)

As the gospel is preached and makes inroads into the kingdom of darkness, Satan and his forces will respond with counterattacks. As the father of lies retaliates, he focuses on neutralising and casting doubts on sound gospel doctrine. If the message of the gospel is unclear and confused, then gospel advance can be halted and ground can be regained.

Doctrinal counter attacks can be subtle flanking manoeuvres such as the creation of myths and endless genealogies (1 Tim. 1:3-4, 4:7), or more serious full frontal charges such as Hymenaeus and Philetus denying the resurrection (2 Tim. 2:18). Faithful elders must maintain a careful watch over doctrinal attacks by continuing to preach the true gospel. As Titus was instructed, “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9).

We also note that the goal of doctrinal confusion and counterattacks is to tempt people to swerve from the faith (1 Tim. 6:21), by promoting ungodliness (2 Tim. 2:16) which ultimately brings spiritual ruin (2 Tim. 2:14). The vulnerable will be captured and burdened with sins in their own homes (2 Tim. 3:6, cf. Titus 1:11). Just as a faithful shepherd protects the sheep from thieves and wolves, an elder exercising faithful kinglike rule will defend and protect God’s people entrusted to him.

As much as an elders’ teaching and preaching ministry is useful for advancing the kingdom, God’s Word is essential in the defence and guarding of the kingdom as observed,
I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: *preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching* (2 Tim. 4:1-2).

**Elders Must Guard Against False Teachers, Distractions and Wandering Hearts**

Who or what threatens the gospel and God’s people? Paul identifies at least three sources of threats to the kingdom in the Pastoral Epistles. These include (1) false teachers, (2) divisive distractions, and (3) wandering hearts.

**Guarding Against False teachers**

Paul is unapologetic and bold in marking out those who are a threat to the gospel in the Pastoral Epistles. This may go against the indifference, political correctness and moral relativity found in much of church life today, but it is consistent with the idea that church leaders are to protect the gospel and keep watch over God’s people (Heb. 13:7). Paul’s word’s echo Jesus in Matt. 7:15, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves”.

- For there are *many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party*. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach (Titus 1:10-11)

- But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. *Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus*, who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some (2 Tim. 2:16-18)

- For among them are *those who creep into households* and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. *Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth*, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. (2 Tim. 3:6-8) Titus and Timothy must be on guard against empty talkers, deceivers, insubordinate, false teachers who oppose the truth. They will deny core doctrines such as the resurrection and creep into households like predatory wolves to prey upon whole
families and the vulnerable. Elders are to watch for such threats and note that even from among their own leadership, there is potential for wolves to arise (Acts 20:29-30).

**Guarding Against Distractions leading to Division**

This second source of attack is perhaps more subtle than false teachers actively peddling lies. As God’s people are to be profitably engaged in kingdom works, Paul warns that the people can be easily side tracked by foolish and worthless discussions. Novel and speculative ideas, along with myths and contentions debates can rob the church of energy, unity and vitality. A healthy church body can achieve great things for the kingdom, but a distracted church will struggle to advance the kingdom. As leaven is to be dealt with early, quarrels and divisions must be quickly identified, avoided, and dealt with by elders as they defend the kingdom.

- “*But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels* about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned (Titus 3:9-11)

- As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith (1 Tim. 1:3-4)

- *Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths.* Rather train yourself for godliness (1 Tim. 4:7)

- Remind them of these things, and charge them before God *not to quarrel about words, which does no good,* but only ruins the hearers (2 Tim. 2:14)

- *Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies;* you know that they breed quarrels (2Tim. 2:23)

Exercising king like rule, an elder is to guard against useless distractions which only lead to disunity. He will steer the people away from foolish controversy, debates, myths and speculations. Unity and peace is a mark of a kingdom ruled well, and will be discussed at greater length in a moment.
Guarding Against Wandering Hearts

The final threat identified in the Pastoral Epistles to kingdom growth and stability is found close to home. False teachers might be hard to identify as they masquerade in sheep’s clothing, but harder still is the reality that from among the appointed eldership, threats can arise (Acts 20:29-30). This should not be surprising given the infamous examples of Judas and the ability of Satan to appear as an angel of light (Gal. 1:8, 2Cor. 11:14). Solomon reminds us to keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life (Prov. 4:23).

To counter this home threat, Paul exhorts Timothy, “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1Tim4:16). As a church leader, Timothy must watch and guard his own heart and also keep a watch on the doctrine that he teaches. This reinforces our previous discussion in Chapter 2 where multiple accountability measures have been established in the church, especially plurality and parity of elders. Nevertheless, there is also an individual responsibility to be alert to temptation and hardening of one’s own heart.

An indicator of spiritual malaise might be found in how an elder engages in disagreements. Paul warns against a controversial, antagonistic and quarrelsome spirit, “And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness” (2 Tim. 2:24-25). In spiritual warfare, one can acquire an unhealthy taste for conflict or can become embittered by the difficulty of the task. No one is doubting the necessity of engaging in theological debate with the ability to correct and rebuke (Titus 1:9, 2 Tim. 4:2), but if the manner is quarrelsome, impatient and harsh, elders are not leading as faithful kings.
A love for money, greed and reputation can also be the undoing of an elder. The biblical qualifications for an elder are just as relevant many years into ministry, as they are when someone is first considered to serve as an elder. Sadly, there are sufficient examples of pastors lording it over the flock driven by material gain, which should serve as a warning to all. To counter this, elders ought to cultivate contentment and generosity (1Tim. 6:6-10, 1 Pet. 5:1-4).

In addition to the heart of the elders, the heart of the people can also be a source of trouble. Paul warns, “For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths” (2 Tim.4:3-4). Those in the kingdom of God may be tempted to stray from sound doctrine and be preoccupied teaching that titillates the senses, rather than promoting greater sanctification. Taken together, elders must guard the gospel and the people against multiple threats including false teachers, divisive distractions, and also from wandering hearts.

Practical Considerations Regarding Defending the Kingdom

In team sports, many prefer to play in attacking or forward positions rather than defensive positions. After all, most accolades are reserved for those who score goals, tries, and touchdowns. Likewise, many like the idea of kingdom expansion work such as church planting and missions. This is viewed as positive, encouraging and uplifting.

But a king has a role in both leading kingdom advance and also kingdom defence. It may not be particularly attractive to consider defending the kingdom, but spiritual warfare can not be won without appropriate defensive strategies developed and deployed. Elders are watchmen and must be able to set a defensive posture for church
life. Through teaching and preaching, they must alert the congregation to dangers and threats that affect the gospel and also the people of God.

The Word of God equips the man of God for every good work, and yet the work of elders is to further equip the saints. In the area of defence, elders must ensure the people are able to detect deviant theology. Elders are to inoculate the congregation against infectious false teachers peddling lies and half truths.

One way to build up a church’s defences is to use historic Creeds, Confessions and Catechisms in the teaching ministry of the church. Some might see them as bulky, diverging from core gospel beliefs and antiquated. On the contrary, these compendiums of theology provide overarching systematic frameworks to understand doctrines such as God, mankind, the fall and the Christian life. Creeds and Confessions provide concentric ring defences, on core gospel issues. These serve the church by providing a theological filter to measure and gauge new ideas and perspectives.

Whilst the core gospel should be central in a church’s life, elders must have a holistic view on their teaching ministry. If they are to take the Word of God seriously, they will strive to teach on the whole counsel of God and include unpopular topics such as ecclesiology, church discipline, eschatology and sacraments. They will also teach against specific heresies doing the rounds and demonstrate what faithful teaching looks like.

Furthermore, elders will train and equip their people to discuss and debate important issues positively. They will model how to avoid foolish controversies but also show when it is appropriate to engage with specific topics (Prov. 26:4-5). Elders will be able to triage topics and debates in such a way that teaches the people that there are

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graduations of certainty. For example, people in the church should be able to see how discussion on the Godhead, sin and salvation are more clear and important than head coverings or teachings on tattoos. Elders who fail to teach on the whole counsel of God leave the kingdom doors open to attack.

Finally, elders are to cultivate a personal piety dependent on God’s Word and establish healthy accountability amongst peers (fellow elders) and also the congregation. As dangers can come from one’s own heart, it is imperative that elders surround themselves with wise counsel to encourage, support and also challenge. Kings of old who walked humbly with God minimised the opportunity for pride, arrogance, greed, lust and a divisive spirit. Elders exercising king like rule are to follow in their footsteps.

Kingdom Management

And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people? (1 Kings 3:7-9)

Unlike David, Solomon’s reign would be characterised by peace and prosperity, rather than conflict and war. In this context of relative stability, we see another aspect of kingly rule in the need to manage the kingdom well. Solomon felt the great weight of responsibility of governing the kingdom after his father David. His request for wisdom from God demonstrates the need to govern the people well, by discerning good from evil and ruling with justice and equity.

Likewise, elders exercising king like rule and authority in the church must display wisdom in their management of the church by ordering the house of God, and promoting peace and unity. Elders must also be faithful stewards of current assets whilst preparing the church for future change and leadership succession.
Management and Stewardship

With the ministry of God’s Word so central in the advance and defence of the kingdom, some might question the legitimacy of ‘management’ in church life. In an article titled *Brothers, We Are Not Managers*, Wilson outlines some concerns especially in larger churches when gospel ministry seems to be dominated by business strategy, theory and buzzwords.\(^{25}\) According to the author, some churches more closely resemble corporate firms rather than the organic body and family depicted in the New Testament. His concerns are reasonable, but it would be an overreaction to reject best business practice for fear of being seen as worldly or corporate.

Elders do not have to go to either extreme of abandoning Scripture or rejecting common grace insights in business practice, when it comes to managing the household of God. Kings of Israel such as Solomon were faithful stewards and managers of God’s people.\(^{26}\) Leaders such as Nehemiah strategized, organised logistics and successfully rebuilt Jerusalem’s walls, Joseph provided for the people of God in Egypt when there was a famine, and Daniel was entrusted with stewardship of Babylon. Many leaders in the kingdom of God were proven managers.

Likewise, Paul reminds Titus that elders are to be οἰκονομός (managers or stewards), “For an overseer as God's steward, must be above reproach” (Titus 1:7a).\(^{27}\) To be a faithful manager is not succumbing to worldliness. It is positively encouraged by Scripture! Time and again, those who are faithful with what they have been entrusted are commended (Matt. 25:14-20, Luke 19:12-28, Prov. 6:6-8). As we have seen already,

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\(^{25}\) Wilson, “Brothers, We Are Not Managers.”

\(^{26}\) The Proverbs of Solomon are filled with practical wisdom for business, trade and relationship management.

\(^{27}\) Merkle, *The Elder and Overseer*. Elder and overseer are synonymous terms.
elders are to be able to manage their own households well. Why? God expects His church to be managed with greater care and responsibility.

_Establishing Biblical Leadership Structures_

Titus was left in Crete so that he might put what remained into order by appointing elders (Titus 1:5). In the Pastoral Epistles, the qualifications for elders and deacons are given so that biblical governance and structures can be established in the local church. The organisational function of an elder’s role may seem far removed from coal face preaching and gospel priorities, but it falls clearly within the scope of responsibility for Titus and Timothy.

A church without biblical leadership structures is likely to be a poorly ruled organisation. Ill-defined roles and lack of accountability can only lead to confusion, inefficiency and ineffectiveness. Furthermore, zealous but unqualified men appointed to leadership offices can also lead to great damage and danger in the church. Appointment of leaders should be done carefully with much prayer, and never done hastily (1Tim. 5:22).

An elder exercising king like rule must be actively engaged in establishing biblical leadership structures, hierarchy and organisation in the church. He may see this as a distraction from gospel ministry, but good governance underpins effective ministry. A king can not effectively advance or defend a kingdom, if the kingdom is disorganised and internally chaotic.

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28 In my local ministry context, there is a desire to plant new churches. However, few of these new works give due consideration to biblical leadership structures. There are amorphous councils, committees, leadership teams, advisory groups, but rarely elders and deacons who are accountable for leading the church.
Equipping Saints

Furthermore, having established biblical governance in the church, elders will also have to ensure that congregational members are also equipped for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:1-16). The Pastoral Epistles encourage Titus and Timothy to prepare ordinary members to exercise discipleship roles and responsibilities within the life of the church and also to imitate Christ in the world.

- Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women likewise are to be reverent in behaviour, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled (Titus 2:2-6)

- Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour (Titus 2:9-10)

- Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarrelling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people (Titus 3:1-2)

- Let all who are under a yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all honour, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled. Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved (1 Tim. 6:1-2)

Elders who rule well will ensure the people are also equipped for ministry within the church and in the world. Working together, church leaders and members will be prepared to take the kingdom forward and also defend against attacks. Elders must prepare the church for spiritual warfare in every season.

Promoting Kingdom Unity and Peace

I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God (1 Tim. 3:14-15)
Faithful kingdom rule in the church will encouraging a culture of unity and peace amongst the people of God. How will the world know that Christians are God’s people? By the way they love one another (John 13:35). Effective gospel witness is directly linked to how Christians relate to one another in the life of the church. Therefore, those in churches must visibly demonstrate the love of God in both word and deed, especially within the church community.

Unfortunately, we repeatedly observe God’s people easily forget kingdom ethics and priorities. In Solomon’s day, we recall that the king was called to resolve a custody argument between two prostitutes (1Kings 3:16-28). King Solomon used his God given wisdom to manage the situation which produced this divine commentary, “And all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered, and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice” (1 Kings 3:28).

Solomon is only the first of many examples of leaders resolving conflict amongst God’s people. Recall the first letter to the Corinthians, where Paul reminds us of the conflict and disagreements within Corinth requiring Apostolic intervention. Paul’s pleadings with Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2-3), and Philemon regarding Onesismus (Philem.), also demonstrate the need for leaders to encourage peace, unity and reconciliation amongst the saints. With the passing of the Apostles, this peacekeeping role is now the responsibility of elders.

Throughout the Pastoral Epistles we see reminders of the peacekeeping function of elders:

- Timothy is to be watch out for those who are divisive (1Tim. 6:3-5)
- I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarrelling (2 Tim. 2:8)
- Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarrelling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people (Titus 3:1-2)
Beyond the church, elders are encouraged to promote peace in the world through prayer, “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way” (1Tim. 2:1-2).

Kingdom leadership pursues peace in the church, the public square and also within the home. It is not hard to imagine a father mediating between two bickering children reading Paul’s prerequisite for potential elders, “He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?” 1Tim3:4-5.

Kinglike leadership may also involve expulsion of those who can not live in peace and unity. Titus is reminded that there will be times when controversy and debates come into the church, but he is told, “As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned” (Titus 3:10-11). Combined with the disciplinary procedure outlined by the Lord Jesus in Matt. 18 for those sinning, those who are divisive should be expelled. Elders are to take a kingly role in such processes leading the congregation in discipline. 29

Managing Assets

If elders are also to be faithful managers over the household of God, are they to have an interest in physical and financial assets of a church? At this point, one might see this responsibility falling upon deacons who have been specifically set apart to manage the church’s practical cares (Acts 6:1-6, 1 Tim. 3:8-13). Whilst it is reasonable to

29 Leeman, Don’t Fire Your Church Members, 112–114. & Dever, The Church, 63–68.
delegate the daily management of physical and financial assets to the care of deacons, elders must still have some understanding of these matters.

Why is this necessary? In short, physical and financial assets directly impact the ministry of God’s Word and the spiritual life of the church. In the original appointment of deacons in Acts 6, we see a negative example. Greek speaking widows who were neglected led to complaints about food distribution. Without redress, this would have hindered the Word of God and also division in the life of the church. A similar concern is repeated to Timothy when he is reminded that true widows must be practically cared for and honoured (1 Tim. 5:3). Deacons can be assigned to care for such widows, but elders must ensure the care is being organised by the deacons.30

Most commentaries on 1 Tim. 3:4-5 focus on elders leading a household in such a way that children are submissive.31 However, Towner suggests that the idea of an elder managing his own household well, “exceeds issues of parenting and husbanding to include management of slaves, property, business interests, and even maintenance of important relationships with benefactors/patrons and clients”.32 An elder was not simply a spiritual family head and minister of the gospel. He was also to possess the practical skills to lead a household including relationship management and stewardship of financial affairs.33

30 Cooperation is needed between elders and deacons, but the overall responsibility lies with the elders. See Waters, How Jesus Runs the Church, 104–5.


32 Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 254.

33 One of the most impressive examples of someone managing a biblical household is the woman in Prov. 31. There is no sense that her skill set is limited to spiritual duties, but rather it covers areas of planning, logistics, trade and commerce. When it comes to elders managing their own households, expectations should be no less than that displayed in Prov. 31.
If Kings of old were to successfully wage war, they were to know the strength of their army and their available resources (Lk14:31). Likewise, elders embarking on campaigns to advance or defend the kingdom must know the condition of their buildings and balance sheet. One can not plan for missions, care for the poor and pay for the utilities unless the finances of the church are sufficient. Similarly, buildings need to be safe and in a suitable state for worship services and outreach events. Elders must lead the church in such a way so that these assets are utilised well for the kingdom and not a stumbling block.\(^\text{34}\)

*Change Management (Communication and Succession)*

Generally speaking, people are reluctant, slow to adapt and wary of change. Most are comfortable with the status quo and can doubt the necessity of change, underestimate the gravity of change and can be unprepared for change. Leaders are not only those who manage present circumstances, but they must have the ability to prepare others for the future. We shall briefly look at two aspects of change in the Pastoral Epistles, advanced communication and leadership succession. These two functions of change management need to be exercised well by elders for the advance, defence and stewardship of the kingdom.

\(^\text{34}\) Reading legal documents, financial statements and building codes can be tedious. This is not the core function of elders and there is no sense that they ought to be experts in these domains. Nevertheless, but they ought to have sufficient familiarity in these areas to be alert to potential risks and opportunities that may present to the church. Prudence is especially needed where finances are limited and wider society is increasingly litigious. Elders must work with deacons and specialists in these areas to ensure that God’s house is managed well. A number of works have been produced to assist elders and deacons manage the assets of the church well. See Michael J. Anthony and James Riley Estep, eds., *Management Essentials for Christian Ministries* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2005); George S. Babbes and Michael Zigarelli, *The Minister’s MBA: Essential Business Tools for Maximum Ministry Success* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2006); Myron Rush, *Management, a Biblical Approach* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983).
Communication

In the Pastoral Epistles, we see the Apostle Paul preparing Titus and Timothy for a time of change. He does this by speaking frankly about his time on earth coming to an end, and also warns of great dangers and difficulties that will come (2 Tim. 3:1-9, 4:6-8). In Chapter 2, we saw how Paul alerted Timothy and Titus to gospel threats and to prepare for such challenges. Paul reminded them of the difficulty and yet assured them that victory is in Christ. Without advance warnings, such threats could come upon unsuspecting church leaders and catch them off guard. Advanced communication and heralding change can be seen throughout the Old Testament in the form of prophecies and also in Jesus’ own warnings to his own disciples (John 14:1-4).

Advance communication is essential in the life of any church as it prepares for seasons of change and elders must exercise signalling with wisdom. For example, a church may need to consider starting or terminating ministry programs, varying financial support of missionaries, hiring new staff, church planting or any number of issues. Elders often deliberate such matters amongst themselves, but they must also lead a church which may not have spent as much time reflecting on the issues. If elders are to rule well, they must assist the church in understanding, processing and taking ownership of such matters. This often takes much time, so advanced communication helps prepare a congregation to make such decisions. Kingly leadership is not simply telling people what to do. It involves engaging the people of God, earning their trust and taking them with you.

35 This form of communication is in addition to the ability of an elder to preach and teach. The communication I have in mind is clear communication within an organisation to focus attention, alert people to upcoming challenges and opportunities, giving direction, addressing concerns and providing hope and encouragement. This type of communication signals about the future and prepares people for upcoming change.
Relatively innocuous issues can rapidly become a hornet’s nest, if elders do not provide sufficient and advance notice to prepare a congregation to consider a matter. People who feel underprepared or overwhelmed often resist proposed changes (irrespective of the merits of the proposal). It is rare for leaders within churches (or other organisations), to be accused of over communication. On the contrary, in periods of change and transition, the most common complaint is no one knows what is happening. Advanced notice provides time for a congregation. It promotes transparency, discussion and accountability. Furthermore, it can create cultures of inclusion, ownership and trust.

Leadership Succession

One of the greatest changes that can occur in any organisation is changes to leadership. Kings, elders and CEOs play such a crucial function that changes in these roles can significantly influence kingdoms, churches and companies. To assist with leadership transitions, we often see more experienced leaders mentoring future leaders. Some Biblical examples include Moses preparing Joshua, Elijah preparing Elisha and Jesus preparing the twelve. Within the Pastoral Epistles, we see Paul preparing for leadership changes by providing instructions to Titus and Timothy. These men are also encouraged to raise up a future generations of leaders after them.

It is also interesting to see kings in the Old Testament pass on kingdom rule and government to their sons (1 Kings 1:1-31). Dynastic succession was often through physical lineage. We see a similar pattern in the Pastoral Epistles as Paul hands down the royal baton to those who are considered spiritual sons of the faith.

- To Timothy, my true child in the faith (1 Tim. 1:2, cf 2 Tim. 1:2)
- To Titus, my true child in a common faith (Titus 1:4)

Like a loving father, Paul ensures that his sons are prepared for a future life of leadership. There is evident warmth of affection and concern, and a close bond between the more experienced Paul with the younger Titus and Timothy. Paul invests much time
with his charges so they can be intimately acquainted with how faithful leadership is to be lived out. Faithful elders must spend much time with future leaders to develop a relationship of discipleship and mentoring.  

- Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 1:13)

- You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me (2 Tim. 3:10)

- But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:14-15)

- I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching (2 Tim. 4:1-2)

Upon receiving the royal charge from Christ and Paul, Timothy and Titus are now to find other men who will carry on the gospel work into the future. Paul is not waiting for Timothy and Titus to become seasoned gospel veterans and stand on the threshold of eternity before they start appointing replacements. From their earliest appointment, there is an expectation that they will be watching out for potential young men to lead in churches. Elders are to prepare men to be future elders, much like a king prepares his son.

- You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also (2 Tim. 2:1)

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36 It is concerning to see spiritual formation in future leaders being outsourced to educational institutions such as seminaries and bible colleges. The problem can lie with aspiring leaders and also existing elders. If both do not see that personal discipleship and mentoring are important for spiritual formation, it will not be given the necessary priority. The model for leadership transition is that Paul mentors Timothy/Titus as sons. If elders are to fulfil their existing calling, they will come alongside younger men to ensure a future generation of elders is trained for the future. This relationship will display intimacy, warmth and trust. A practical question we might ask of church elders is “Who is your Paul (i.e. mentor)?” and “Who is your Timothy/Titus (i.e. apprentice)?” See also Newton, The Mentoring Church.
This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you (Titus 1:5)

To manage a kingdom well, elders must have an interest in the future welfare of the church, well beyond their own ministry. This will mean that elders will take seriously the imperative to identify and invest in young faithful men, appoint them as elders, disciple them as a father mentors a son.\(^{37}\)

**Practical Considerations Regarding Managing the Kingdom**

In this most recent section, we are reminded that kings are not only to advance and defend the kingdom through spiritual warfare, but they are also to be faithful stewards of the household of God. A focus on organisational management may be seen as worldly, or perhaps not contributing to kingdom growth through numbers, but elders are to remember that management is not a lesser spiritual duty to preaching and teaching.

If done well, good management can enhance the ministry of God’s Word. Poorly managed churches are often divided, confused about direction and financially constrained. This does not position the church well to advance the kingdom, nor prepare her to defend the gospel. Sometimes church growth comes through improved quality (i.e. healthy church culture) rather than quantity (i.e. numerical growth in attendance).

Elders are to work together with the deacons to ensure every aspect of church life is reflective of a God of order. To this end, elders must establish biblical structures of leadership within the church and also invest in building up the saints for works of ministry. This ensures that the church body is functioning as God has designed, each part working together and in the same direction.

Furthermore, elders will ensure that a culture of peace and unity is pursued within the membership, and division and dissent is minimised. At times, elders along with the

\(^{37}\) For a collection of essays and letters written by seasoned pastors to prepare a future generation of leaders, see Ascol, *Dear Timothy.*
congregation may need to practice church discipline. This is never pleasant, but must be
done for the glory of God, the good of the people, and a witness to the world. A united
church with evident love for one another is a powerful gospel witness.

As kings of old had an interest in all the affairs of state, elders must have a
working familiarity with financial and practical matters in church life. Elders ought to
meet regularly with deacons to coordinate and ensure that the various aspects of church
life are working well together. Elders also have a responsibility to prepare the church for
change. This includes timely communication with the church to signal important issues
that need to be considered and also preparing the church for eventual leadership changes.
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

It was the contention of this paper that Christ like kingship was under appreciated as a model for Christian leadership, and that a recovery of kingship in church leadership will not only glorify God, but also bring blessing to His people. In this final Chapter, I provide a brief concluding summary of the thesis, outline some blessings and benefits, and encourage Biblical balance during adoption and practical implementation.

**Summary Review**

*In Chapter 1*, a brief survey of leadership studies was drawn from the literature demonstrating an array of models utilised to highlight roles and responsibilities of church leaders. I then focused on the *munus triplex*, reviewed its historical development and observed that Christ’s threefold office as prophet, priest and king, had drawn interest in recent discussions. Whilst originally developed to better understand Christ’s redemptive role, I noted that the three offices could helpfully be applied to elders.

Whilst many recognise the prophetic and priestly functions of elders, it was noted that the kingly function of elders is often met with some ambivalence or hesitation. Cultures particularly resistant to authority, those scarred by leadership failures and possibly an under emphasis of kingship leadership in pastoral training, may combine to an under appreciation of kingly roles within churches. To address this perceived imbalance, we reviewed kingship in Scripture with a focus on the Pastoral Epistles.

*In Chapter 2*, the theme of kingly rule was traced from creation, through the history of Israel, and to the church today. We were reminded of the glorious Kingship of
Christ, who displayed faithfulness in every area of leadership where others had failed. Jesus Christ is not only the ultimate King who rescued His people, but he is also a perfect model for elders to imitate as they lead.

This paper then looked more specifically into the Pastoral Epistles, as the most extensive works on pastoral instruction in Scripture. To support the theme of kingship, we observed Paul’s doxologies highlighting Christ the King of kings, Christ as the royal offspring of David, and that union with Christ involves reigning with Him.

We clearly saw Christ’s kingship on display by His royal call, appointment and commissioning of gospel leaders. Furthermore, we noted kingly qualifications from the Old Testament matched closely the elder qualifications from the Pastoral Epistles. Leadership for Israel’s kings and church elders both require faithfulness, proven character and a deep reliance upon God’s Word. This should not be surprising, given elders share a common duty with kings of old, to lead and rule well.

This challenges cultural resistance to authority in the church, as there is a clear duty to lead, manage and rule by elders, and a corresponding response of respect and submission from the congregation. Ruling well is not autocratic, dictatorial or in any way self serving. If Christ the King’s rule is through sacrificial service, there is zero room for elders lording it over the people of God.

I demonstrated that the nature of an elder’s authority is limited in scope. It can not be absolute, as Christ himself is the only absolute ruler and King of kings. To emphasise this, we observed a Biblical system of checks and balances requiring an elder to submit to (1) God’s Word, (2) to other elders, and (3) to the congregation. Despite the potential for abuse, God has called for elders to rule and manage well. The only question remaining is whether the people of God will submit to His plans and design for His church.
In Chapter 3, a threefold framework was developed to understand what ruling well involves for elders. Church leaders are to (1) advance, (2) defend and (3) manage the kingdom of God. In contrast to physical kingdoms of the Old Testament, church elders exercise their office in spiritual realms of warfare.

To *advance* the church, elders are to exercise their rule and authority by a right handling of God’s Word. We saw this clearly in the Pastoral Epistles, through Paul’s example, his exhortations to Titus and Timothy, and the need for all elders to be to able to teach. Taken together, there is an overriding emphasis on the ministry of the Word of God in church leadership. This is similar to the prophetic office of Christ, but draws on spiritual warfare overtones in kingship and also leading the people in battle. We also observed the need for elders to have the Word of God central in their life (echoing the call for kings of old), and to grow and mature in the Scriptures (Deut. 17, 1 Tim.4:6, 2 Tim. 3:14-15).

To *defend* the church, elders are to guard the gospel and also the people of God. Whilst many often plan and work towards kingdom advance, kingdom defence is often overlooked. To address defensive blind spots, the Pastoral Epistles alert us to the clear and present danger of false teachers who come to destroy, distractions such as idle discussions leading to division, and also wandering hearts. To counter this, elder’s must teach the whole counsel of God to prepare for and to neutralise threats.

To *manage* the church, elders are to be more conscious of their roles as stewards. In addition to advancing or defending the kingdom, elders have a mandate to build healthy internal structures and cultivate peace in the kingdom. We reviewed the need to establish Biblical governance (i.e. appointing elders and deacons), and also equipping the wider body of Christ to serve. Faithful kingly stewardship also involves ensuring physical and financial assets are in order as these have the potential to impact the ability
to engage in spiritual warfare. A final area of consideration is the need for elders to prepare the church for change, through advanced communication to the congregation and succession planning.

**Balancing Considerations**

The purpose of this thesis has not only been to demonstrate that Christ like kingship is required of elders in the Pastoral Epistles, but also to encourage adoption and application of these leadership principles in our churches. To motivate adoption and implementation, one must keep the benefits and blessings of practical implementation in mind, but also be aware that potential pitfalls also await.

**Enjoying the Benefits and Blessings of Kingship**

The first benefit focuses on glorifying God. As the person and work of Christ is the ultimate source and model for kingship in Scripture, all recognition and reflection of such kingship in churches brings glory to Him. Faithful implementation of kingship in church elderships celebrates Christ’s kingship. It is not a revelling in the gifts or efforts of any given elder, but it encourages people to give thanks and praise to the great King of kings. For without Christ’s kingship, there can be no good kingship in the life of any church. Embracing Biblical kingship in churches, affirms Christ’s sovereign right to call elders to serve and also recognises Christ’s ability to enable them to imitate His kingly rule. If we reject kinglike rule in the church, we ultimately reject leadership of God. We must not rob God of glory.

Secondly, kinship encourages elders in their calling. Whilst other leadership metaphors such as Servant and Shepherd are helpful, they do not emphasise enough the need to exercise authority and rule that elders are required to exercise. They also do not emphasis the reality of spiritual warfare that a king must be engaged in. Elders must have confidence that they have the authority to teach and preach God’s Word and gospel
ministry involves warfare. Such confidence will manifest in bold, courageous and challenging preaching. A king declares, calls to war, commissions and charges. He defends His people with loyalty and determination. He rules to bring peace and prosperity. If elders recognise (and are encouraged in) their royal calling and commission, they will minister with greater boldness, confidence and faithfulness.

Thirdly, kingship brings blessings to the people of God. God’s design for relationships is a reciprocal order of loving rule and humble submission. This relationship of trust is required in marriages, families, work places and the wider world. When implemented well, both those who lead and those who submit are blessed. Blessings come as elders rule like Christ, by sacrificially loving and serving their congregations. Likewise, congregations are blessed as they humbly submit, honour and obey. When leaders rule well, the people reap blessings of sound teaching, experience peace and unity in the church, and are constantly reminded of the care of King Jesus.

The final benefit produces a powerful witness. Whilst the world promotes a culture of autonomy and independence leading to division and despair, a church embracing biblical kingship will be radically different. Rule and submission in the church may at first seem foolish to the world, but good fruit can not be so easily ignored. Elders and congregations remain imperfect, yet if they humbly trust God’s design for sacrificial kingly rule and loving submission, they will embody a community of peace, unity and trust. These are the things the world desperately longs for, and when encountered in churches, act as a witness to Christ’s rule on earth.

In summary, elders and churches ought to embrace Biblical kingship as it reflects priorities of Scripture. But it should also be practically implemented as it brings glory to God by celebrating the Kingship of Christ, it encourages elders in their rule and authority, it blesses the people with peace and unity, and acts as a witness to the world.
Cautionary Note

Whilst I have sought to emphasise and encourage kingship in churches, I am also conscious that an over reaction can have a detrimental impact, especially with those prone to extremes. Whilst I have called for the recovery of kingship functions in leadership models in the church, it must be balanced with other models such as prophetic and priestly roles. It must also be balanced with Shepherding and Servanthood paradigms, and other leadership motifs. Kingship is not an exclusive model, nor necessarily the best model, it is simply one of many models found in Scripture and must therefore be applied with Biblical balance.

If churches are persuaded to adopt a kingship model in their congregations, they must also apply the Biblical model of kingship. It would be a tragedy to apply a model of rule and authority based on fallen kings of the world or worst still, a misunderstanding or warping of God’s Word. True kingship is not authoritarian nor self seeking. The perfect model of kingship is Jesus Christ our King. His rule is full of mercy, grace and love. Any model of kingship departing from the Servant-King’s example should be rejected, whilst those that reflect His loving and sacrificial work should be embraced.

In conclusion, this thesis established that kingship is an essential function of elders in their rule, authority and management of the church. Using the Pastoral Epistles, I demonstrated that kingly rule is a dominant theme in Paul’s exhortation to future church leaders and tasks them with the responsibility of advancing, defending and managing the kingdom of God. May a recovery of Christ like kingship in church leadership bring greater glory to God and deliver great blessing to His people.
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