

**Elders  
And Their  
Congregations**



**by B. R. Hicke**



# **Elders and Their Congregations**

**B. R. Hicks**



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# Chapter One

## The Description Of The Office Of Elder And The Qualifications To Be An Elder

Both the Elder and the people whom he serves must understand the office of an Elder or they cannot perform their respective duties before God and before each other.

God always has led His people to institute the office of Elders among nations, among tribes, and among churches. During the Old Testament dispensation, Elders in Israel were the eldest and the most judicious of the people. According to Old Testament customs, the fathers or Elders stood, by primogeniture, at the head of the division of tribes. They regulated the relations of the tribes and clans and punished offenders and criminals while administering law and equity. Thus, the Elders were the superiors of Israel's tribes, clans, and families. Israel's Elders were regarded as the representatives of the nation.

From the beginning of time in the Old Testament, a person's *age* has been the standard of dignity and honour. In the patriarchal system, the office of Elder was the foundation of government in the family, in cities, and in the nation. Even during Israel's slavery and bondage to Egypt, they retained the governmental organization of ruling by Elders. Israel's long history as a nation reveals that they were constantly governed by Elders.

After Israel's possession of the Promised Land, she had Elders of the land (I Samuel 4:3; I Kings 20:7); she had Elders of the tribes (Deuteronomy 31:28); and she had Elders of the cities (Deuteronomy 19:12). Israel always retained the office of Elder during these times: under the Judges (Judges 2:7); under the Kings (II Samuel 17:4); in her captivity (Jeremiah 29:1); and on her return from captivity (Ezra 5:5).

From the beginning of the New Testament dispensation, the LORD established the office of Elder in the churches (Acts 14:23; 15:2,4,6,22,23)

The LORD also has established the office of Elder so that Elders' particular governmental rule can be performed in His Sanctuary in Heaven (Revelation 4:4,10; 5:5,6,8,11,14; 7:11,13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4).

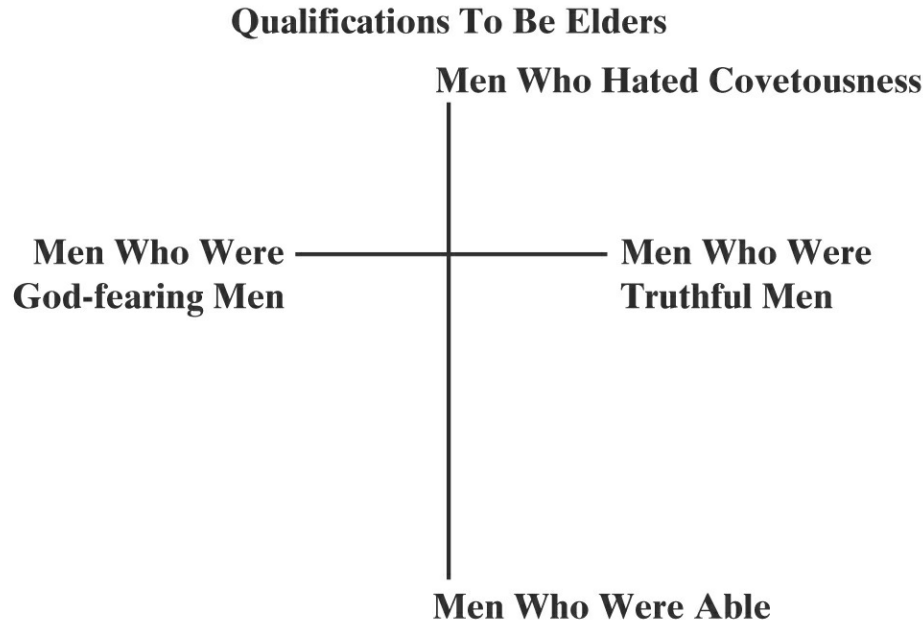
In the New Testament, the title of Elder applied to the Rulers of the Christian churches, upon whom rested the responsibility and duty of leading believers onward and upward in their spiritual education and in helping them to stand firm in the formation of their moral development.

Originally, in the Old Testament, the title of Elder referred more to the natural *age* and to the *dignity* of the person. Old Testament Elders not only had to be of mature age in the natural realm, but they had to be a person with spiritual dignity, respect, integrity, and honesty. The Old Testament Elders had to possess spiritual esteem. They had to be of upright moral character before God and before the people, and they had to have proven themselves to be trustworthy, noble, and virtuous persons.

The men whom Moses chose out of the congregation to rule over the people were persons of dignity and honour.

**Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:** And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, *that* every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear *the burden* with thee (Exodus 18:21,22).

The Rulers or Elders whom Moses chose had to be men who fit the following description: (1) men who were able (2) men who feared God (3) men of Truth, and (4) men who hated covetousness.



The first qualification for these particular Elders or Rulers required them to be able men. The Hebrew word for *able* is *khah-yil*, meaning a force, an army, wealth, virtue, valour, and worthy. The Elders had to be strong soldiers to war against corruption in the congregation.

The second qualification for these particular Elders or Rulers required them to be God-fearing men. The Hebrew word for *fear* is *yaw-ray*, meaning to be morally reverent toward God, to be fearful and afraid of taking one's own way, which would displease the LORD God, the Master and Owner.

The third qualification for these particular Elders or Rulers required them to be men of Truth. The Hebrew word for *Truth* is *eh-meth*, meaning stability, certainty, Truth, trustworthiness, assuredly, establishment, faithful, right, sure, and verity.

And, the fourth qualification for these particular Elders or Rulers required them to be men who hated covetousness. The Hebrew word for *hate* is *saw-nay*, meaning to hate personally, to consider something to be an enemy or foe, to be utterly hateful or odious. The Hebrew word for *covetousness* is *beh-tsah*, meaning to plunder, unjust gain, dishonest profit, or filthy lucre.

Obviously, these Elders, who were able men, God-fearing men, truthful men, and men who hated covetousness, were men of great dignity.

In the New Testament, the title Elder applied to the *office* and to the *spiritual age* and *spiritual dignity* of the person.

The office of Elder began in the local congregations and extended to districts as the churches grew and multiplied. Being an Elder was clearly distinguished from being a deacon.

Elders first came into prominence in the Christian churches during the time the Disciples scattered abroad and the Apostles withdrew from Jerusalem, following the death of Stephen.

In the New Testament churches, Elders were the Pastors, Leaders, and Rulers of the flock. Now, Elders are the spiritual teachers in the congregation whose duty is to expound the wisdom and knowledge of the Scriptures to the congregation and to administer Holy Communion to them.

As believers, we must take earnest heed to the LORD's commands in the New Testament concerning the office of Elder so that we will not hinder our spiritual education and our moral development in Christ Jesus.

Our most important thoughts should dwell lovingly upon the Name of the LORD, and next in importance, we should think about our own responsibility to God, whether we are an Elder or an individual member of a

congregation. As individuals, responsibility educates us to be faithful labourers in the Word, in prayer, and in sharing. It educates us to be answerable, accountable, and liable to God as a person. Given the office of Elder, we find that responsibility further educates us for the trust committed to us, for the office with which we have been endowed, and for the debt of love we owe to God and to His creation.

A great degree of diseased perception of reality amazingly exists in many of God's people concerning responsibility. Some people fear taking on the responsibility of obedience, but they have no fear of taking on the responsibility of disobedience. On the other hand, some people do not fear taking on the responsibility of obedience, but they greatly fear taking on the responsibility of disobedience.

Believers fulfill their responsibilities to the LORD by responding to His claims and demands on their lives. When they fear the responsibility of disobedience, they seek the LORD's help because He will strengthen them to perform the duties for which they are responsible. The LORD is faithful to those who sincerely seek His help.

We are responsible for the nature, quality, and motives of our works, whether they are performed out of obedience or disobedience and whether they are performed as an Elder or as a member of the congregation.

The greatest thing that keeps our sense of responsibility alive is the constant awareness of God's all-seeing and all-watchful eye. If we work under the awareness of the all-seeing and all-watchful eyes of the LORD in fulfilling our duties and responsibilities as Elders and as congregations, we will be respectful, honest, and happy. If forceful circumstances and situations never brought us to accountability to God, we would become careless, worthless, and wasteful of the time and energy God has granted us.

Every Elder and every individual "lamb" and "sheep" in the LORD's flock has a spiritual work to perform within his own heart. And each person also has outward duties to perform, and he or she exerts influences on others which are peculiarly his or her own, which no one else is responsible for except that individual.

When an individual's soul or mind is diseased in its prideful perception of reality, that person will construct many false gods and images concerning what he thinks others owe him. The false gods of pride in the heart cause a person to believe others owe him large debts of honour, glory, and exaltation. Therefore, when these imaginary debts are not paid, these false gods beget all manner of bitterness and hate in a person's heart. Those with proud hearts always are concerned about the debts they suppose others owe them. But, the humble heart, soul, and mind of a person who truly is cleansed by the precious Blood of Jesus thinks clearly about the debt of love he owes to God and to others.

The person with a sincere soul looks with crystal clear perception to his own responsibility of how to better discover the debt of love that he owes to God, to his Elders, and to his "lambs" and "sheep." Consequently, the humble, sincere heart expects more from himself and less from others. The person who has a humble, sincere heart concerns himself with performing the spiritual work of love toward God and others within his own heart, more than in receiving the outward glory, honour, and exaltation from others.

God measures responsibility by the performance of our God-appointed duty to do good to others — not by the amount of injury we receive as a result of evil deeds that others perpetrate on us.

A keen, Spirit-filled conscience gives the believer the distinct opportunity of choosing between right and wrong and assuming the distinguishing responsibility and privilege of being obedient to the right when others are assuming the responsibility of being disobedient by choosing the wrong. *Responsibility* is the third brother that is related to *Position* and *Power*.

If we sin by joining with a congregation who has set themselves against a true Elder, we are as responsible and guilty before God as though we had committed the evil and wrong all alone.

We must be aware that every moment and every act of sowing seed, whether the seed is good or bad, will be reaped in an eternal harvest, and our awareness of this Truth will impregnate our will with the vigour and virtue of the fear of God. Thus, we will become more responsible in our respective duties. As Elders, we are to rule humbly by standing and leading the "lambs" and "sheep" of God's flock so that they will fear Him and obey Him.

As congregations, we are to follow, dutifully, obediently, and reverently, God's true Elders who stand before us to lead us forward in our spiritual education and moral development.

When we look, from Genesis to Revelation, at the overview of the office of Elder and his responsibility, it is possible to perceive clearly the supreme importance that God places on this office. Therefore, let us take heed to what God's Word declares concerning the responsibility of Elders to God and to His congregation of "lambs" and "sheep," plus the responsibility that the congregation has to Elders, so that we may all learn to fear God and keep His Commandments.

# Chapter Two

## The Elders' Duties And Responsibilities To Their Congregations

True Elders represent age, both naturally and spiritually. The gray hairs on one's head cannot always bear witness to the spiritual age of the heart. But the head outwardly aged with gray hair and the heart inwardly aged with the maturity of Christ Jesus displays great beauty! The graceful and honourable age, both naturally and spiritually, is only the beginning of immortality. Aged, mature Christians, crowned with the snow of time upon their heads, are found full of the love, joy, peace, and faith of Christ.

God has called His Elders to be mature or aged in their hearts so that they may remain true and faithful in their personal relationships with the LORD and so that they may stand and lead God's people by teaching, educating, and training them in the way they should go.

The Hebrew word for *elder* or *age* is *zah-kehn*, meaning full maturity of age, both naturally and spiritually.

For example, when we train our children in the way of the LORD, He promises that they will not depart from the Truth of the LORD when they are old (*zah-kehn*).

Train up a child in the way he should go: and **when he is old** [*zah-kehn*], he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6).

The *training up* of a child involves giving him his spiritual education from the Word of God. To train up a child *in the way he should go* means to educate the child in the way of Christ's Wisdom during the days of his youthful vanity, which will keep him from the sinful lusts and ensnaring blindness of youth.

Both natural parents and spiritual parents, the Elders, must present the Wisdom and Knowledge of Truth to their children in their youthful learning stage so that they will be prepared for what they are designed to be and to do according to God's Purposive Will in this life and in the life to come.

Because the time to help form children's character is while they are young, it is important to catechize, train, and discipline them early in their lives. Whether their character turns out to be good or evil, concerned parents must see to their instruction and discipline, giving their children every opportunity to develop clean morals and upright character.

Teaching children the true principles of moral character while they are young fits them to be the moral governors of their thoughts and actions for the rest of their lives. Parents should catechize their children concerning the principles of spiritual Truth, thus assuring that they are rooted and grounded in God's Word. When they grow to be a *zah-kehn* or an Elder they can, in turn, teach those principles to their children.

Training children to be good spiritual soldiers is vitally important because they learn, then, to take up the spiritual arms of the Sword of Truth and the Shield of Faith. And they learn to keep rank and to observe the commands of the great Captain, the LORD Jesus Christ. This kind of training never will be forgotten, even when the child becomes old (*zah-kehn*).

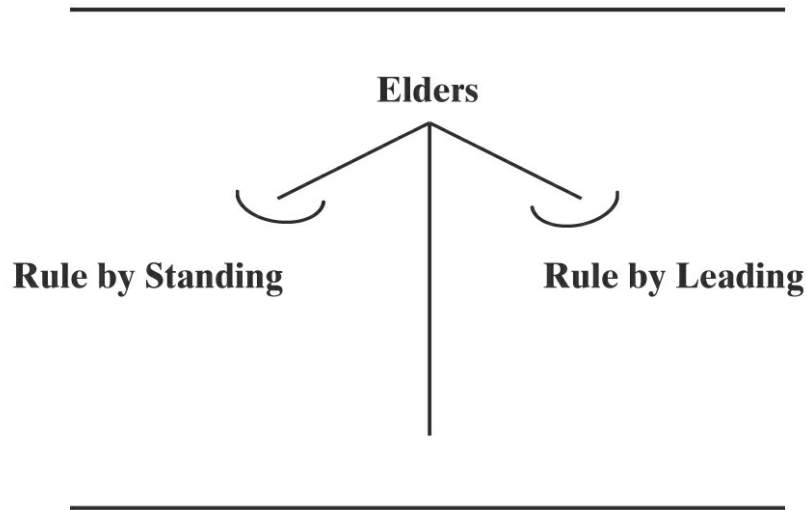
Disciplining children will teach them to develop self-control, orderliness, efficiency, and resistance to going in the way their corrupt hearts desire to go. By accepting discipline and submitting to the LORD's Authority and Control, they will walk in the way in which they should go, which is to walk in the Truth and Light of God's Word.

Joseph was the son of Jacob, who was a *zah-kehn* or Elder, both naturally and spiritually. Although Joseph was not a natural *zah-kehn* when he went to Egypt, he proved that he was a spiritual *zah-kehn* or Elder by his exemplary *moral behaviour* while there. Joseph proved, by his impeccable attitude and his righteous behaviour in Egypt, that he had received the proper catechizing, training, and discipline from his father Jacob.

Jacob was a good Elder (*zah-kehn*) over his own household, and Joseph was a good Elder (*zah-kehn*) over Potiphar's house. Thus, he became a governor or ruler over all the land of Egypt.

The spiritual office of Elder is by appointment from God, but the character and nature of an Elder are developed through the catechizing, training, and discipline that spiritual parents practice during the days of his youth.

God commanded His Christian Elders to rule over His spiritual household in a twofold manner: by standing and by leading.



## I. Elders Rule by Standing.

**Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.** For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer *is* worthy of his reward. Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. I charge *thee* before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality (I Timothy 5:17-21).

The Greek word for *rule*, here, is *pro-is-tay-mee*, meaning to *stand* before, to set over, to superintend, preside over, to be a protector or guardian, to care for, and to give attention to, to *stand* before in rank, to practice, maintain, be over. The Hebrew word in the Hebrew New Testament is *mat-teh*, meaning a branch, shoot, rod, staff or bread, sceptre. This teaches us that the New Testament Elder is to rule by standing before the people with a living Sceptre or Rod of the LORD's Name, as Moses did. The Psalmist called this living Sceptre the Rod of the LORD's Strength. The Rod of the LORD's Strength is our *Elder* Brother, the LORD Jesus Christ, Who bears the mighty Unbegotten Name of His Father.

### A. The LORD Jesus Christ, the Living Rod, Will Rule with His Mighty Word and Name when He Returns to Earth.

The LORD Jesus Christ is the perfect example of how to stand as an Elder in order to rule God's people.

THE LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. **The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies** (Psalm 110:1,2).

David gave these prophetic utterances concerning Christ the Messiah. The Heavenly Father honoured His Son, Jesus Christ, by resurrecting Him from the dead with His Unbegotten Glory and by seating Him at His own right hand in the Heavens until the time He will make Christ's enemies His footstool. The LORD Jesus Christ has been advanced to the highest honour, and He has been vested with the Father's supreme, sovereign Power.

Christ's enemies ultimately will become His footstool through the work of His Heavenly Father — to Christ's eternal honour — but to His enemies' perpetual disgrace.

After Jesus Christ's Death, burial, and resurrection, the LORD first sent His *Word* out of Zion as a Rod or Sceptre with His mighty Name on it to establish His spiritual Kingdom in the hearts of men. The second time, the LORD will send His living Word, the LORD Jesus Christ, the living Rod bearing the mighty Name of the LORD, out of Zion when He returns to earth again. His Word, as a living Rod or Sceptre, with the mighty Name of the LORD upon it, will personally go forth out of Zion during the Millennium to establish God's visible Kingdom upon earth. The powerful Sceptre, with the mighty Name of the LORD upon it, will go forth out of Zion to the battlefield in regal Power and Authority to tread down all enemies in decisive defeat. The divine Power of the Son's Sceptre will not fail nor cease warring in the battle until all inimical opposition against the Father's Cause and Master Plan has been destroyed.

The first time God sent His only Begotten Son into the world, the Son was the victim of abject humiliation, slander, persecution, and crucifixion at the hands of His own people and the political world.

However, the second time God sends His only Begotten Son to the earth, the Son will be a splendrous King of divine exaltation, bearing the all-powerful Unbegotten Name of His Father. At His second coming, the LORD Jesus Christ will be an object of glorious honour, of elevated good, of liberated delight, and He will be praised and worshipped by all the remnant of mankind.

Many people will rally with devotion and enthusiasm around the Messiah, Christ Jesus, during His Millennial Reign. The Messiah will subdue all enemy nations by the mighty, sharp, two-edged Sword of His Word that will go forth out of His mouth, and He also will win the hearts of mankind by His powerful and influential Word which will go forth from His mouth. The LORD Jesus Christ, as a true, perfect, spiritual Elder, will stand and rule with the Rod of the LORD God's Name until He puts down all opposition to the Father's Purposive Will.

By Christ's example, God the Father also teaches us how to stand and how to rule as a true Elder. We are not to war against God's Purposive Will but against those who oppose God's Purposive Will.

The fame of the conquering Sceptre of the LORD Jesus Christ will be acquired in the Millennium because of His relationship and union with the Unbegotten Name of His Father, the Unbegotten LORD God. The Father has given the Son the invincible strength of His tetragrammaton Name.

## **B. Moses Ruled with the Rod with the Name of the LORD God on It.**

God also gave Moses a rod (*mat-teh*) in the Old Testament, under the type and shadow, that had His Name of "LORD God" on it. This rod with the Name qualified him as the chief Elder to stand before Israel.

And the Lord said unto him, What *is* that in thine hand? And he said, **A rod** (Exodus 4:2).

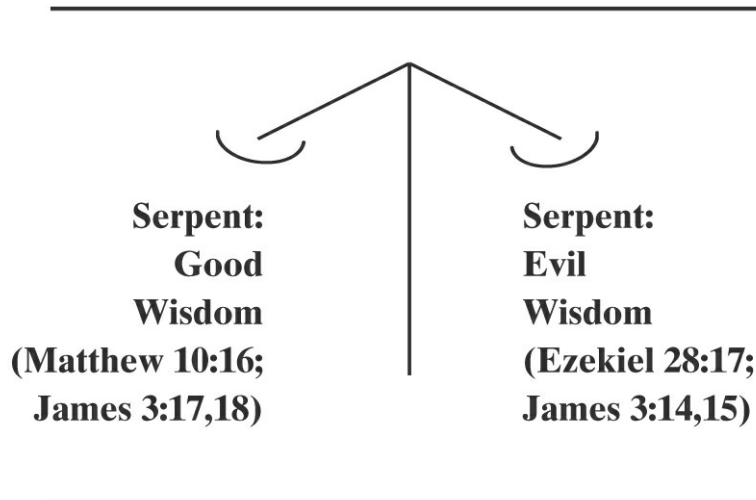
And **thou shalt take this rod in thine hand**, wherewith thou shalt do signs (Exodus 4:17).

And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt: and **Moses took the rod of God in his hand** (Exodus 4:20).

We can learn a dual lesson by studying God's purpose in changing Moses' rod into a dual serpent, as it were, and back into a rod.

God commanded Moses to take the natural rod in his hand, which symbolized his natural sceptre of power and authority, and cast it down to the ground. At God's command, Moses' rod was changed into an evil serpent, or something to flee from; and at God's command, the evil serpent was changed into a good serpent, one to be taken hold of by the tail; then, it was changed back into a new rod.

God uses the serpent in the Scriptures to represent wisdom, both good and evil, just as He uses a lion to represent both the good Power and Dominion of Christ Jesus and the evil, devouring power of the Devil.



The good Serpent Wisdom is from above in Christ Jesus.

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: **be ye therefore wise as serpents**, and harmless as doves (Matthew 10:16).

A poor, helpless, unguarded sheep in the midst of a pack of ravenous, wicked wolves, which are ready to devour and to destroy, needs *the good Serpent Wisdom* to find the clefts in the Rock, Christ Jesus, in order to be shielded as a harmless dove or sheep from death and destruction.

But the **wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy**. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace (James 3:17,18).

The Wisdom that is from above in Christ is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruit, and without hypocrisy.

The evil Serpent wisdom that is from below in fallen Lucifer is impure and corrupt.

Lucifer corrupted his Serpent Wisdom in the beginning; therefore, it became an evil, destructive wisdom.

Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, **thou hast corrupted thy wisdom** by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee (Ezekiel 28:17).

In the beginning, the brightness of Lucifer's Wisdom made him preeminent upon God's holy mountain. However, when Lucifer took on a spirit of prideful arrogance, he corrupted his Serpent Wisdom and was cast out of Heaven, down to earth and to Hell. When Lucifer became proud of the brightness of his Serpent Wisdom, he corrupted and desecrated his Wisdom. Pride always erodes the good Wisdom that Christ Jesus gives.

After Lucifer had corrupted his bright Serpent Wisdom, it became sensual and devilish. Now he uses it here on earth to lead people into the pits and holes of sin and wickedness instead of leading them into the clefts of the Rock, Christ Jesus.

But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. **This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish** (James 3:14,15).

Lucifer's corrupt wisdom flees from Christ, establishing its own independent support through envy and strife. Envy and striving are the workings of Lucifer's corrupt Serpent wisdom against the good, pure, humility Serpent Wisdom from above in Christ Jesus.

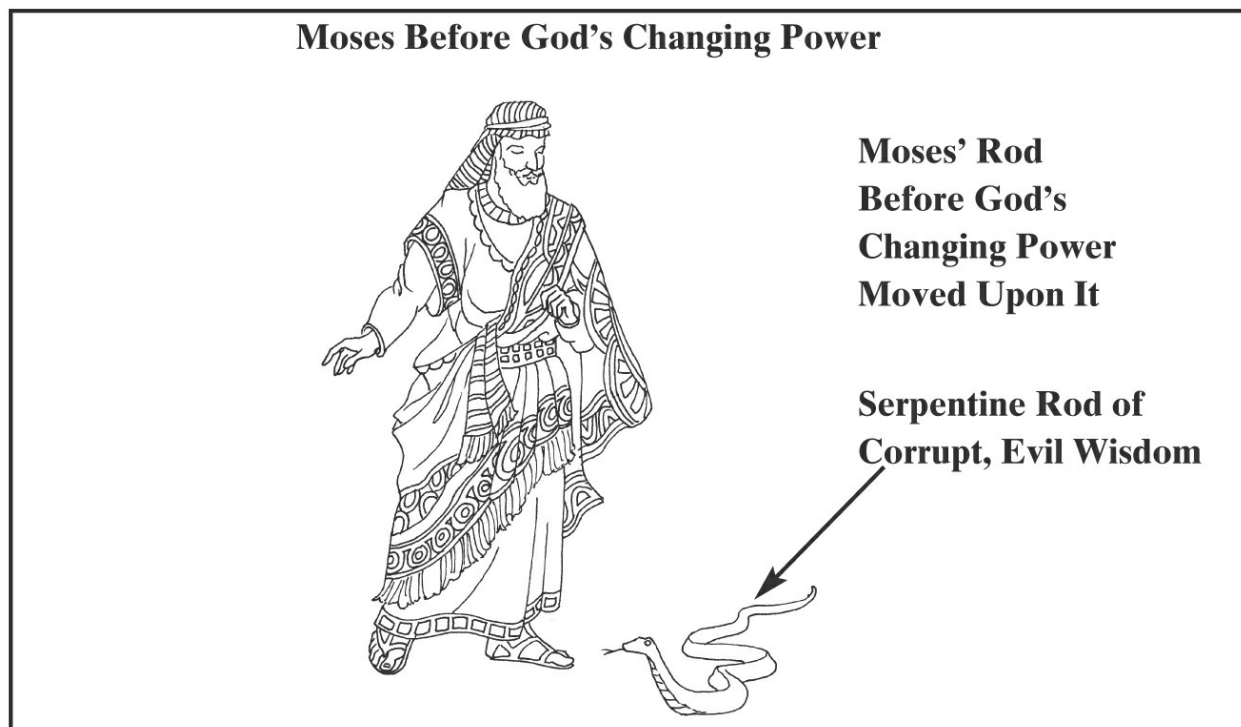
Therefore, the first lesson that Moses had to learn before becoming the chief Elder in Israel was to flee from the

prideful arrogance of Lucifer's evil Serpent wisdom that was found in his old rod of power and authority.

The second lesson that Moses had to learn before becoming the chief Elder in Israel was to turn and take hold of the tail or humble beginning of the new and good Serpent, as it were, that is found in Christ Jesus. After God had hidden all His good humility Wisdom and Life in the Rod, He turned the Rod into a seemingly ordinary, humble rod again. However, after God had wrought all these miraculous changes in Moses' rod, the LORD God put His Holy Name on it, and it became the Rod of God.

Since this lesson was so important in preparing Moses to become the chief Elder in Israel, it is necessary for us to further examine some of the spiritual Truth contained in it so that it can become an instructive example to us.

God revealed to Moses that his ruling sceptre, apart from God's changing Power and Name, was filled with the evil, corrupt serpentine nature of Lucifer. Moses already had demonstrated the treacherous, twisted, and subtle turning of the evil, serpentine nature of his carnal sceptre of power when he endeavoured to deliver the Israelites by personally killing an Egyptian and hiding his body in the sand. God desired to instill the knowledge and conviction in Moses that he could not stand before Israel as a chief Elder by leaning on his own serpentine rod of corrupt wisdom for support.



God could not use Moses as a chief Elder to deliver His people if Moses relied upon the evil, corrupt wisdom of strife and murder. Moses had to experience his rod being metamorphosed by the LORD's changing Power which changed Moses' rod from a rod of evil, corrupt, serpentine power into a Rod with God's Name upon it that was full of the good, holy, pure, and peaceable Wisdom of Christ.

Thereafter, when Moses went to Israel and stood before them as a chief Elder, leaning upon the Rod of God, they accepted him as the LORD's ordained Ruler. Before Moses could use the LORD's new Rod to lead Israel in the way, he first had to lean on it himself and personally experience its powerful support. Moses ruled Israel by first *standing* before them with the Rod; then, afterwards, he ruled them by *leading* them with the Rod of God.

A miraculous change was wrought in Moses' old, dry, serpentine rod of evil, corrupt ruling and reigning power by the mighty, changing Power of God. Moses' Rod, upon which the Holy Name of the LORD God was placed, became filled with the Power of Christ's holy, pure, and peaceable Wisdom.

God's miraculous Power wrought a change in Moses' old serpentine rod, changing it into a Rod of good Wisdom, a new Rod of ruling Power, upon which the LORD God could put His Holy Name. By Moses' new Rod having the Name of the LORD God upon it, he was enabled to stand before Israel and Pharaoh in victorious Power.

A rod is a symbol of the elongation and extension of a person's hands to reach up or to press down, according to

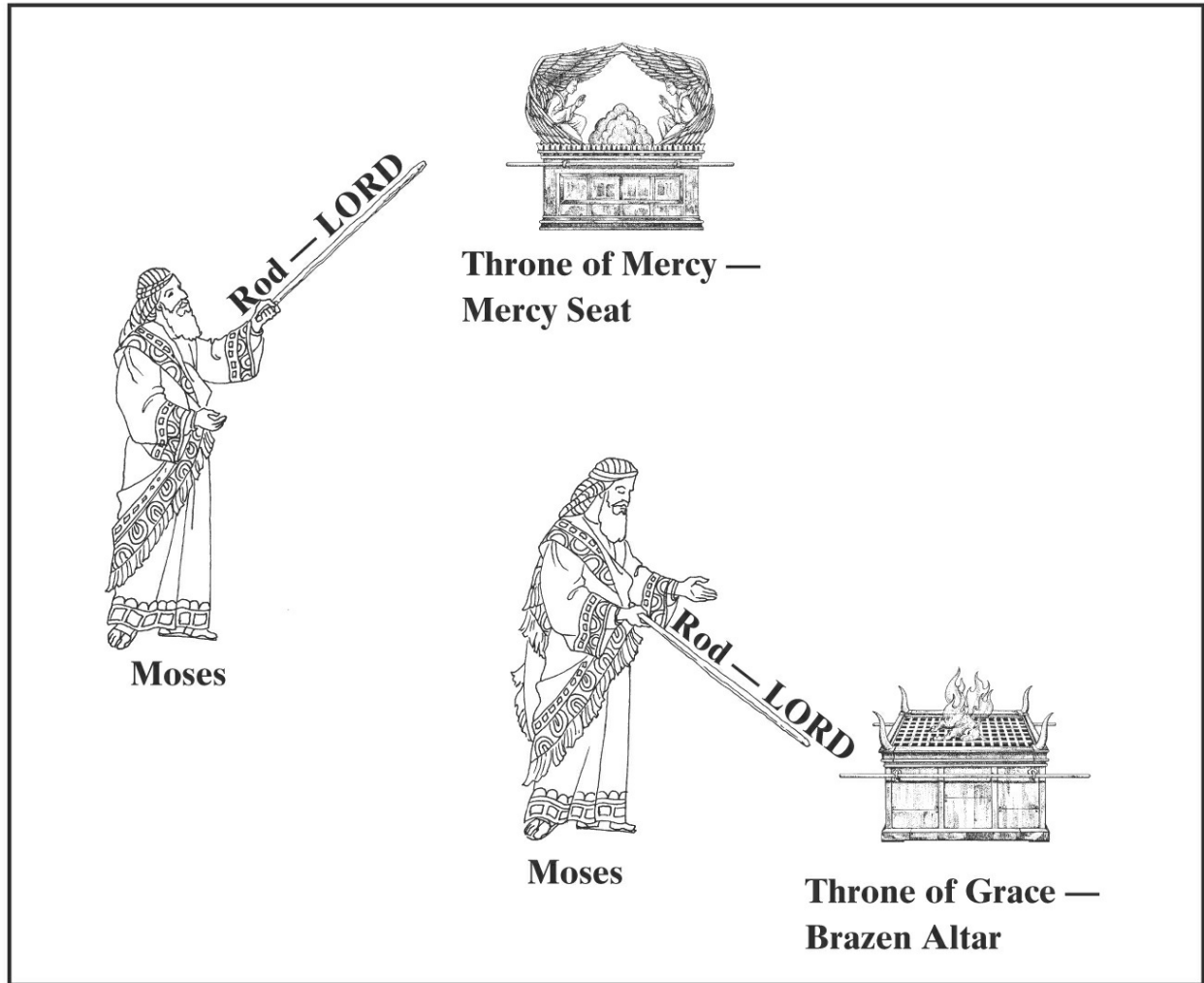
the need. Therefore, Moses' Rod became an elongation and extension of his hands to reach up to God for the Power and Mastery of the LORD God's Name that he would need to support him in his God-given task of standing and leading Israel.

The first use of the rod or staff in the natural realm is for the purpose of support because it elongates or extends a man's hand, as it were, so that he can support himself by leaning on the earth or ground. Thus, God first had to reveal to Moses the evil, serpentine nature of his old rod, his old, serpentine ruling power, upon which he had been leaning and supporting himself. Second, God revealed to Moses the good Serpent Wisdom that he had to appropriate in Christ and upon which he had to lean for support in order to rule Israel by standing and by leading. God showed Moses that he first must learn to stand and lean on the Name of the LORD, God's new Rod of Power and Authority, before using it to stand before others and to lead others.

Moses had to see the evil, serpentine nature of his old rod of fleshly power and authority upon which he had been standing and leaning and ruling so that he could flee from it; then, he could be counted worthy to be the chief Elder over Israel. God caused the false rod, the false image that Moses had been standing and leaning on to rule, to turn upon him as an enemy. The false rod that he had been leaning on to support himself, and that he had used to serve him as a means of mastery and power, rose up against him in the form of an evil, inimical serpent from which he had to flee.

If a person sows the mastery and power of the evil serpent, he must expect to *reap* the evil serpent nature of that mastery and power turning against him. The merciful, gracious LORD changed the nature of the mastery and power of Moses' rod from evil to good so that He could put His Holy Name upon the rod. Therefore, Moses' rod became a new Rod of Mastery and Power because of the presence of the LORD's Holy Name upon it.

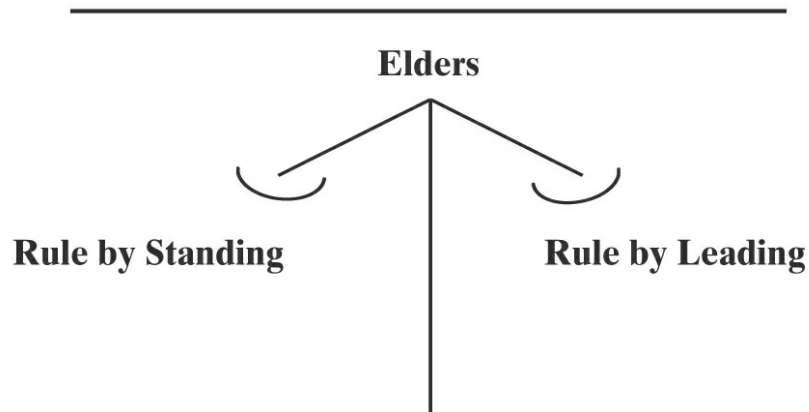
The LORD's Rod (*mat-teh*), with the Mastery and Power of His Name, was an elongation and extension of Moses' hands so that his hands became elongated and extended, as it were, reaching upward to the Throne, the Mercy Seat, and downward to the Throne of Grace.



**II. Elders Rule by Leading.**

The second form of ruling by Elders is their leading the congregation. Elders have official authority from God to assume the responsibility of ruling God’s people by leading them. The Hebrew word for *lead*, used in the New Testament in connection with Elders who rule, is *naw-hag*, meaning to lead as a flock or as an army.

To *lead* means the Elder has to take precedence; he has first place; and his role is guidance. If an Elder allows God to give him a cleansed head, a pure heart, and a humble spirit, he will not fail in his mission of leading God’s flock. If the Elder himself is guided by the Headship of the LORD Jesus Christ, he cannot fail in guiding them to God’s desired destiny.

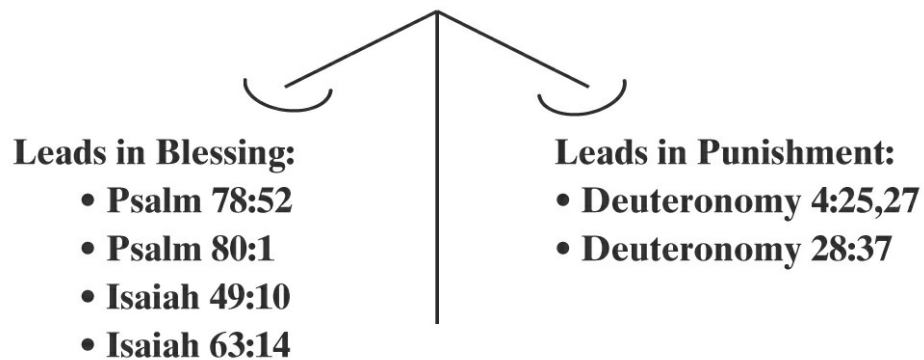


To rule by leading also means to move along, showing the gate, the door, the way, and the path; to guide with the hand, to conduct and direct in movements; to precede, and to introduce by going first. Leading also means to keep in front of, to be faster than others. In order to rule by leading as a commander, chief, and director, one must know the goal and objective of the Master and Owner and the direction to take toward that goal and objective.

The LORD is the best example of one who rules by leading. He leads both in blessing and in punishment.

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**The LORD Rules by Leading  
(Psalm 48:14).**



The LORD has promised to be the Guide of His people forever, through blessings and through punishment, until they arrive at the fullness of God's Master Plan for them.

**For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide *even* unto death** (Psalm 48:14).

The LORD has promised to continue leading and guiding the nation of Israel beyond the limits of mortality — the ordinary lot of all peoples and nations. The LORD Who led Israel in her youth as a nation will continue leading her as a nation, through His blessings and through His punishments, until she becomes an immortal nation among the nations.

The LORD will lead and guide Israel with extreme caution and care, like a father who leads his young child

gently along. The LORD will preserve Israel's energy and vitality until she can arrive at the place of His Perfect Will as a nation.

Likewise, Christ Jesus leads and guides His people through blessings and punishments until they arrive at the Perfect Will of the Father.

As an Elder studies the LORD's example of ruling by leading, he or she acquires the proper knowledge of how to govern and guide by leading.

God's leader or Elder must be willing to follow the LORD's preeminent and precedent example of ruling by leading in blessings and punishments.

#### **A. The LORD Rules by Leading (*Naw-hag*) His People into Blessing.**

But made his own people to go forth like sheep, **and guided them in the wilderness like a flock** (Psalm 78:52).

The LORD blessed His people by leading them in their journey from Egypt to Canaan's Land. He went before them in the Cloud and Fire, and He appointed their halting places for them by *ceasing* to lead the way.

The LORD's sole purpose in leading the children of Israel through the wilderness was for their spiritual education in the wilderness and their moral development in Canaan's Land. God gave Israel her independence and freedom from Egypt, and He gave her the blessed Promised Land solely so that she could serve Him and be a doer of His *Torah*.

God created and reserved Canaan's Land for His Purposive Will.

From among all the lands where people dwell on earth, God had a well-chosen way and path through the wilderness on which He ruled in blessing by leading Israel to His chosen goal.

The LORD caused Israel to journey like sheep, according to the pace they were able to bear. As a conscientious Shepherd, the LORD was faithful to constantly provide for His sheep. The LORD divided His sheep from the goats, the Egyptians, and set His marks of Blood, Fire, and Water upon them and led them forth.

With tender care, the LORD guided His sheep faithfully and effectually, stilling their fears. The LORD led them on a safe way and on safe paths through the dangerous and deadly wilderness. Israel lacked no good thing from the loving, leading hands of their Shepherd.

GIVE ear, O Shepherd of Israel, **thou that leadest Joseph like a flock**; thou that dwellest *between* the cherubims, shine forth (Psalm 80:1).

In this verse the Psalmist cried unto the LORD to arise and shine forth as a Shepherd, as He did when He led Israel through the wilderness. The Psalmist desired God's Leadership in his day, as when God first led Israel by His *Kabode* Glory from the Mercy Seat and the flashing Light of the High Priest's Breastplate, during the time she was in Canaan's Land and for all the time she was a faithful and obedient wife.

In Egypt, Israel resembled a lonely, lost sheep, surrounded and hounded by hungry, vicious wolves. However, the LORD God, as Israel's infinite, divine Shepherd and supernatural Guardian, protected and watched over His lonely and seemingly lost lamb — His beaten, abused, and misused servant. Thus, through the merciful, gracious, and benevolent Name of her LORD, Israel survived.

They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: **for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them**, even by the springs of water shall he guide them (Isaiah 49:10).

When Israel's Messiah and Shepherd returns to earth again, He will make merciful provisions for the sheep of His pasture. He will provide food and drink in the same way He did in the days of old. He will shield His sheep from the heat of the day. He graciously will guide and lead them by springs of fresh, running water. The greedy shepherds of this world lead their followers to broken cisterns, which cannot hold the Living Waters of eternal satisfaction; but God rules His sheep by leading them to springs and fountains of Living Waters of eternal satisfaction.

As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD caused him to rest; **so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name** (Isaiah 63:14).

The LORD, as the great Shepherd and the mighty Ruler, will continue leading and guiding the sheep of His pasture with His glorious arm, making His Name glorious in all the earth.

The LORD has led and will lead the obedient sheep of His pasture into all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

#### **B. The LORD Rules by Leading (*Naw-hag*) His People into Punishment.**

When God's children are disobedient and intractable, He leads them into His punishments, chastening and correcting them. Mankind cannot escape the LORD God's ruling and leading. The only choice man has is to choose to be led into blessings or to choose to be led into punishments. Man cannot negate God's ministry of ruling and leading.

When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, **and shall corrupt yourselves**, and make a graven image, *or* the likeness of any *thing*, **and shall do evil in the sight of the LORD thy God**, to provoke him to anger: (Deuteronomy 4:25).

**And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you** (Deuteronomy 4:27).

Moses prophesied to Israel that, after she had entered Canaan's Land and had become "old" in the land, she would forget the new, fresh, grateful relationship that she had in her youth as a nation. When Israel was young, she remembered that her origin as a nation was in slavery, servitude, and bondage in Egypt. Her memories kept her obedient, grateful, and faithful to God.

As long as she remembered her bondage, servitude, and slavery, she gratefully acknowledged that it was God Who had given her independence and freedom from Egypt and her inheritance in the Promised Land.

However, when Israel grew old in the Land of Promise, she became forgetful and, therefore, ungrateful. She changed her youthful enthusiasm and awareness of the LORD God as her Owner and Master for the diseased perception of reality that she was the owner and the master of the Land of Promise.

When the memory of the LORD as the Cause of her existence faded, and the memory of Christ faded as the Redeemer, she cast herself into the arms of heathen depravity and idolatry.

In Israel's depravity and darkness, she no longer viewed God as the One Who blessed her and the land, according to her obedience, harmony, and faithfulness to His Purposive Will. However, when Israel began to look upon the visible forces of nature as the cause or source for granting or denying her blessings and prosperity, she took the next step into depravity and idolatry by making images and gods to represent the visible forces of what she esteemed to be the cause of her blessings and prosperity. At that time, Israel descended deeper into darkness and depravity by openly declaring that God was not a dispenser of blessings and prosperity but an obstruction to her joys and happiness because God's Laws always demanded that she refrain from lust and that she control her sensuality.

Israel erroneously imagined that by making her own images and gods and establishing her own laws, she would find salvation and happiness in a better way, outside of God's Will.

## Israel's Descent into Darkness and Depravity



1.

**Nature (not God) Was the Source, the Cause, of**

2.

**Nature Had Power to Deny or to Grant Blessing and Prosperity.**



3.

**Israel Made Images and Gods of Nature.**



4.

**Israel Declared God Was an Obstruction to Her Joy and Happiness.**

5.



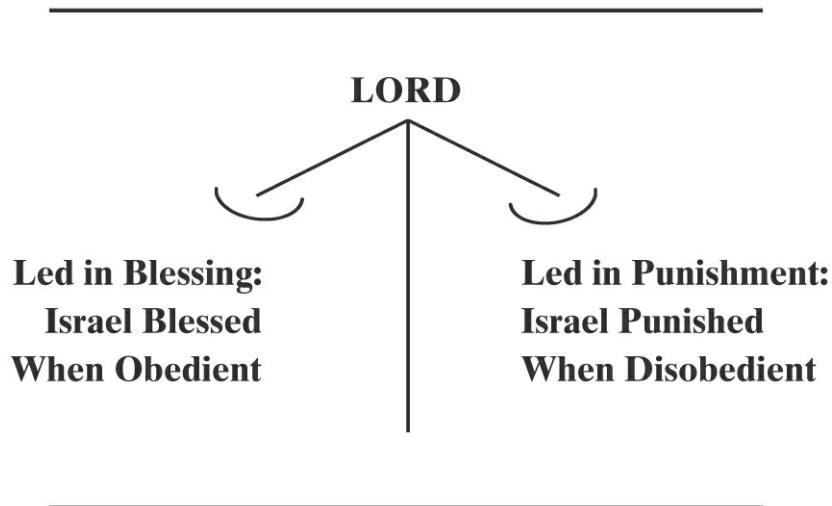
**Israel Bowed to the Gods of Nature.**

Through Moses, God warned Israel what would happen when she turned from Him as her Ruler, Creator, Leader, and Cause of her blessing and turned, instead, to the creation as the source of her supposed blessings and prosperity. As a result of her defection from God's Purposive Will, the LORD ruled over her by leading the creation to withhold its blessings from her and by leading her into exile among the nations.

And **thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations** whither the LORD shall lead thee (Deuteronomy 28:37).

Israel's exile has been for chastening and correction. After she has learned her final lesson, brought upon her because of her rejection of the Messiah, the Redeemer, the LORD Jesus Christ, He will lead them all back to the Promised Land. This will happen when He again returns to earth.

God used Israel to be an instructive example of the great contrast of His blessings and His punishments.



Israel flourished in great blessings, both spiritually and naturally, when she was obedient to the LORD as her Owner and Master. However, the awe-inspiring desolations she suffered in her punishments when she turned from the LORD God and took up the natural creation as the cause, the source, of all her blessings and prosperity is a complete contrast to the blessings she received when she obeyed God.

World history records the facts of Israel's times of exile. Israel is a tremendous witness throughout the world that God rules by leading into punishments as well as blessings. As a nation, her experiences with the LORD's ruling by leading is an impressive lesson for all nations and all peoples to heed so that they will know and understand God's ways of ruling. Israel's history of God's punishment is an instructive example to all individuals and nations who turn their backs on God's Laws of Universal Morality.

Israel's history of God's blessings is also a demonstrative example to all individuals and nations who obediently follow the LORD. A nation's or an individual's enjoyment of prosperity, protection, and happiness is a result of their faithfulness to the LORD as their Cause, Owner, and Master. A nation's or an individual's suffering of punishments of poverty, evil, attacks, and misery are the results of their denial that the LORD God is the Cause, Owner, and Master of all their blessings, protection, prosperity, and happiness.

All of God's Word is profitable (II Timothy 3:16,17); therefore, He graciously has recorded the principles of His ruling by leading, both in blessings and in punishments, in order to teach His Elders how to rule in a way that is pleasing to Him.

### **III. True Elders Are Worthy of Double Honour when They Lead God's People by Standing and Leaning on the LORD's Mighty Name.**

The LORD desires that His Elders lead his people by standing and leaning on the Rod of His Holy Name.

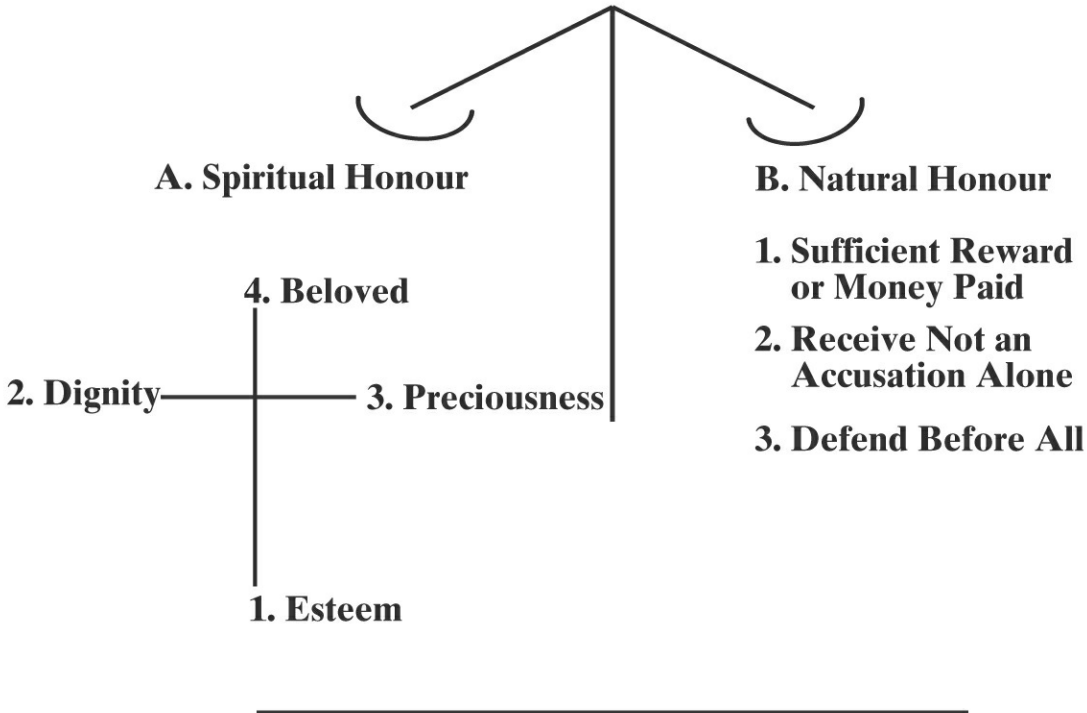
Paul told Timothy to *rule (mat-teh)* the people by standing before them and leaning on the LORD's Name. Standing and leaning on the LORD Jesus Christ's Name gives Elders the necessary divine support and rank before the people for them so that they can fulfill the office of Elder.

Elders should outrank all their congregations in their steadfast trust in the LORD Jesus Christ's Name. They should prove their trust in the LORD's Rod by leaning and standing upon it. Because the LORD's Name is an elongated and extended Rod, Elders can use the Rod of Power of the LORD's Name in the heights above to reach the Mercy Seat, thereby driving back the punishment they deserve. Elders can also use the LORD's elongated Name to touch the Throne of Grace in the depths below, thereby obtaining the favour and the blessings from God that they do *not* deserve.

Elders who rule well by standing and leaning in this manner are counted worthy of double honour.

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**True Elders Who Stand and Lean on the LORD's Name  
Are Worthy of Double Honour**



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God commands us to honour a worthy Elder with double honour: that is, spiritual honour and natural honour. When Elders rule well by standing and leaning upon the Rod of God's Name, as an example before God's people, they are considered worthy Elders.

**Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.** For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, **The labourer is worthy of his reward.** Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. I charge *thee* before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality (I Timothy 5:17-21).

**A. Congregations Owe Their Worthy Elders Spiritual Honour.**

The spiritual honour due a worthy Elder consists of his having his congregation bestow on him esteem, dignity, precious value, and spiritual love as a beloved one.

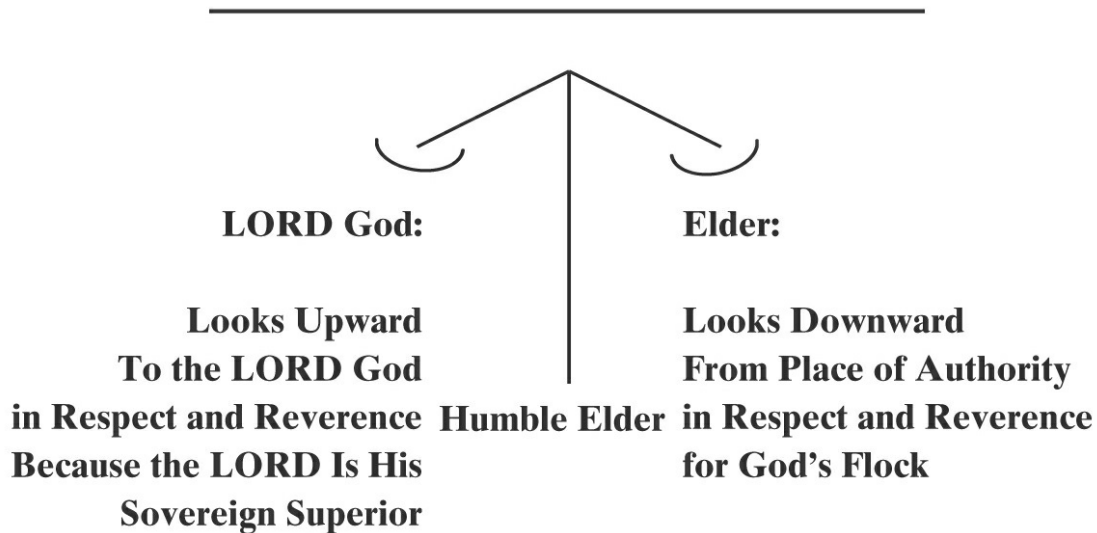
Showing respect to one's Elder is one way of showing reverence to the LORD. We treat God with irreverence by banishing His commands to honour, remember, obey, and salute the Elders who have a dual rule to fulfill in standing over us and in leading us.

The Turkish people (so historians have said) carefully collect every scrap of paper which comes their way for fear that the Name of God may be written upon it and that by casting it away they should be irreverent toward God. If these people carefully collect scraps of paper, perchance the Name of God may be written upon them, how much more should we carefully collect the pages of God's Holy Word that most surely have His Name and His commands written on them?

Reverence and respect toward God and toward His Elders are ennobling sentiments that need to be preserved and guarded.

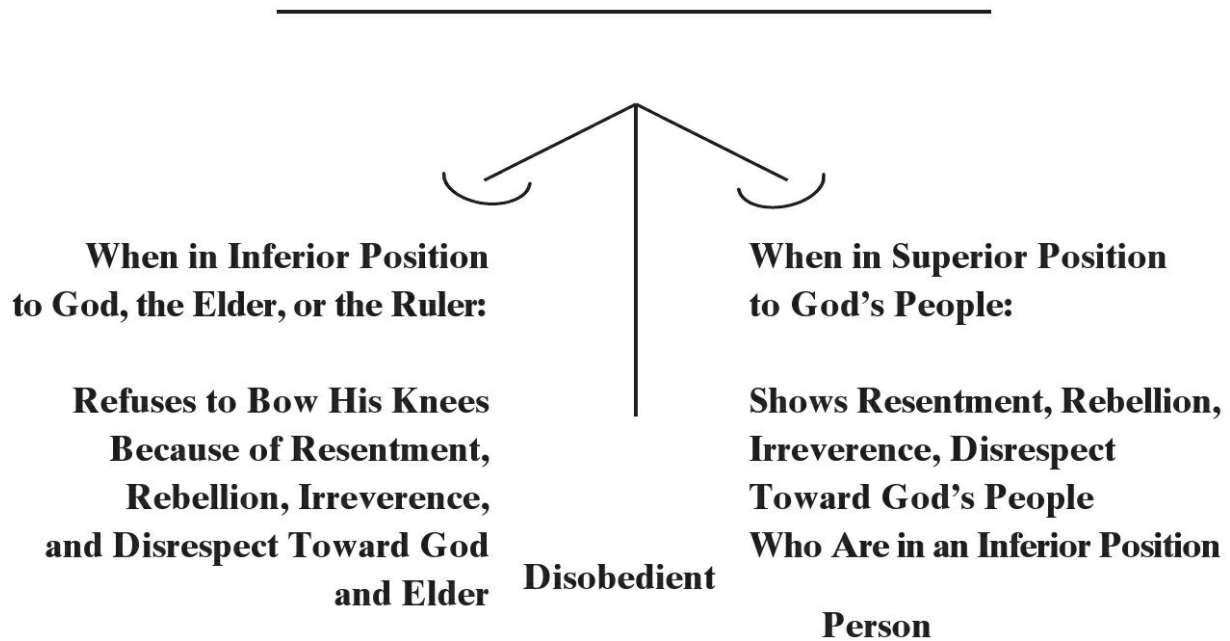
Only a person with a blind, arrogant mind considers it vulgar and degrading to bend in submission to one who is above him. When this kind of person is in the presence of one who has a superior position to his, he becomes an antagonistic warrior against the ruler, the one who is above him, in order to escape his “smallness.” The person with a proud mind strives and struggles to elevate himself above the one who truly is above him as the ruler over him. This is the epitome of irreverence toward God and toward His ordained rulers. If we are so presumptuously arrogant that we cannot bow and be submissive to God’s appointed leaders and rulers and look upward to them in respect and reverence, God never will trust us nor count us worthy of a position of rulership, where we would look *downward* upon His people.

A true Elder will have a reverent and humble attitude before God and His flock.



The humble Elder kneels in reverence and looks upward in humility respect to his Sovereign Superior. Therefore, he is able to kneel in humility respect from his place of authority and look downward with humility respect on God’s flock. The reason an Elder is pridefully arrogant in his looking down upon the flock, since he is their superior, is that he has not been kneeling in humility reverence to his Superior, the LORD God.

Furthermore, when a person kneels in reverence and respect to God and his superiors, whom God has placed *over* him, he will kneel in respect and reverence toward God’s children who are *under* his rule and authority. When God’s people fail to hear and obey God’s laws of respect and reverence, the picture looks like this:



People who cannot bow their knees to those in authority carry their same nature of resentment, rebellion, and disrespect with them, when they are placed in a place of ruling and reigning. If a person is resentful, rebellious, and disrespectful toward his superiors, he also will be resentful, rebellious, and disrespectful toward his inferiors.

The nature of a disobedient person does not change because he suddenly may be exalted from an inferior position of being a follower to a superior position of being a leader.

No pride or cruelty is equivalent to that of a vulgar, insubordinate mind when it rules over others. The disrespect and irreverence of this kind of mind is unparalleled.

Another danger that Lucifer poses to a congregation is his lure to get people to be flippantly irreverent toward their God-given Elders. Irreverence is one of the first signs that indicates spiritual weakness and spiritual deterioration, whether it be in the Elder or in the congregation.

No one can jeer and sneer at God's Laws and Ordinations and expect to stride forward in his relationship with God. Fine loyalty to God consists of reverence and respect in a person's private life, as he humbly yields to the Father, recognizing Him as the Cause of all things; and it consists in that person's surrender to the Son as the effective Redeemer in all things. When we learn these principles in our spiritual education and practice them in our moral development, we will be able to govern and guide the lives of others very well. Therefore, if we expect to continue climbing higher in our spiritual education and striding forward in our moral development, we must yield to the LORD with reverence and respect in our place of superiority, as well as in our place of inferiority.

### **1. Congregations Owe Their Worthy Elders Spiritual Esteem.**

Spiritual esteem consists of giving a worthy Elder a high value by comparison; to value or rate highly; to prize; to hold in high estimation.

Spiritual esteem and respect for a worthy Elder will flow from a person's understanding in his heart and head when that person's heart and head have been changed by God's Life-giving Word that has been ministered through the Elder who is standing and leaning on the Name of the LORD Jesus Christ. The intrinsic worth of such an Elder produces spiritual esteem. When affection unites with esteem, the noble, royal *child* called "high regard" is born.

An Elder has the power, independently of all collective circumstances, to acquire the spiritual esteem of those sincere ones whom he has served by ruling well in his standing and leaning on the Rod of the LORD's Holy Name.

A true Elder can acquire the regard and respect of the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the equal and the

unequal by joining himself to the Rod or Staff of the LORD's Holy Name. The union with the LORD's elongated and extended Name gives the Elder a special mark of distinction and superiority because sincere ones always feel the mercy and grace of that Name through the elongated and extended hands of the Elder who is able to reach down and touch their hearts. The Elder's union with the Power of the LORD's Holy Name begets a strong, friendly, mutual regard between the Elder and the congregation.

A true Elder's faithful labours of love and benevolence, which he achieves through the Name of the LORD, excite spiritual esteem from the congregation.

## **2. Congregations Need to Bestow Dignity on Their Worthy Elders.**

Dignifying God's Elders brings spiritual honour to them. To dignify an Elder means to rank his position as a high position, a position of nobility, grandeur, and worth. It means to render unto the Elder the importance due to his rank or position. To dignify an Elder also means to have a high sense of a true Elder's moral worth and the true nobility of the Elder's character and to have a high sense of his honour and uprightness, with an utter contempt for all who render the Elder mean, despicable, and dishonourable.

To dignify Elders means to recognize that God has conferred upon them a high rank in His spiritual society by giving them a position of importance and honour.

The Word says that filthy dreamers speak evil of Dignities or Elders (Jude 1:8).

God has granted His true servants, His true Elders, these forms of spiritual honour because they faithfully plow up the soil of the minds of God's people and cast in the eternal, exalted Seeds of Life and Light and because they constantly are pushed down in some form or way by the opposing powers of darkness.

## **3. Congregations Need to Consider Their Worthy Elders as Being Precious Ones.**

By the congregation's considering the Elder to be a precious one, an Elder receives spiritual honour.

Something that is precious is something that is of great price or value; it is very costly. The preciousness of a true Elder is beyond an earthly price. To mold and to form a true Elder cost God the sacrifice of His beloved Son at Calvary's Cross. To become a living sacrifice or Elder in God's Sanctuary, cost a true Elder the giving of his or her neck to the knife of God's Sanctuary.

The preciousness of God's Word makes a true Elder priceless and beyond all carnal worth in this world.

## **4. Congregations Need to Consider Their Worthy Elders as Being Beloved Ones.**

By recognizing their loving and amiable qualities, and regarding them as beloved ones, the congregation gives spiritual honour to Elders.

Someone once said, "If beauty were a string of silk, I would wear it about my neck for a certain testimony that I belove it much."

To "belove" means to exist in love.

We should wear our esteem, dignity, and precious regard for our Elders like a string of silk around our necks, as it were, for a certain testimony that we "belove" them very much.

Let us be obedient to the LORD's Word and give the spiritual honour to His Elders that God has commanded us to give.

Let us esteem them by respecting, appreciating, reverencing, and admiring them for Christ's sake. Let us not disrespect, dis-favour, and depreciate them.

Let us dignify the LORD's true Elders by regarding them, giving attention to their teaching of Truth. Let us mark them and be concerned for their interest and their welfare. Let us not be unmindful of them, disregard them, be inattentive to them, and dislike them because they put their finger on our unChrist-like attitudes and behaviour.

Let us consider the preciousness of true Elders who point us to Jesus Christ and who teach us how to grow up unto the measure of His Stature. Let us treat them as God's valuable, costly, dear, choice, and fine gifts to us. Let us not treat them as inexpensive, cheap, ugly, unattractive, and worthless objects.

Let us belove our Elders with affection, friendliness, kindness, tenderness, devotion, warmth, and attachment that is becoming to a grateful member of a privileged congregation.

Let us not be filled with hate, dislike, detestation, and abhorrence for God's gifts unto us of His true Elders. Let

us not hold them in abomination in our hearts. True Elders who stand before us, leaning on the elongated and extended Name of the LORD Jesus Christ, are worthy of the spiritual honour of our esteem, our dignity, and our beloved affections toward them.

## **B. Congregations Owe Their Worthy Elders Natural Honour.**

God has commanded His people to give an Elder natural honour as well as spiritual honour, when he rules by standing and by leaning on the Name of the LORD and by labouring. The threefold natural honour that God demands the congregation to give to a worthy Elder is remuneration for his work; loyalty in not receiving an accusation alone; and a courageous heart to rebuke the guilty before all.

### **1. Congregations Owe Their Worthy Elders Remuneration for Their Work.**

An Elder's work consists of ruling, which involves labouring in many forms.

Assuming the responsibility of a soul's eternal welfare is a tiresome and burdensome work for Elders. Souls, who at times are diametrically opposed to their own present and future welfare, cause Elders great mental, emotional, and spiritual work, as they try to prevail on, persuade, advise, and guide their sheep.

Members of the congregation who have envious and striving hearts are hard to manage, restrain, and conduct out of Lucifer's waters of strife into Christ's calm and tranquil waters of peace; therefore, they place an awesome responsibility on Elders.

To rule, as an Elder, in warlike confrontations between members of the congregation or between members of a home, trying to determine, to establish, or to settle by decision what is the morally right thing for each member to do, loads the Elder with fearful work.

Maintaining God's required level of holiness and separation for the congregation means that a true Elder undertakes the mighty work of taking a firm stand.

The true Elder will work diligently as an under-shepherd to exercise God-given Power in controlling, governing, managing, and directing God's flock into green pastures and down beside still waters.

Sitting in the "carriage of responsibility" before God and drawing in the "ruling reins" on some "wild horses" in the congregation, who are only interested in their individual advancement and prideful exaltation instead of the collective advancement of the congregation, is hard work for a true Elder.

Preaching is an act of painful effort for the human body, and true Elders exert much muscular strength in performing the act of true preaching in the natural realm.

While heifers, in the natural realm, pleurably graze in the fields, labouring oxen painfully toil to open up the soil so that new seeds can be cast into the ground, bringing forth new fruitfulness. Likewise, in the spiritual realm, the congregation pleurably feeds on the green pastures of Truth that have been given them, while Elders labour painfully, toiling to open up the soil of people's minds so that they can cast in new Living Seeds of Truth, which will take root downward and bear fruit upward in the hearts of all who hear, believe, receive, and become doers of the Word.

True Elders help the congregation gain eternal Spiritual Substance through their labour of preaching and teaching the Word and doctrine. The energy spent in preaching equates to digging ditches. Opening up soil, either the spiritual soil of the mind or the literal soil of the earth, requires great expenditure of energy.

True Elders use tremendous mental effort in intensely striving and painfully exerting themselves to guide God's flock through their mental darkness and their spiritual lack of understanding into the radiant light of new depths and heights of God's Truth.

If they expect to reap a fruitful crop of understanding in the minds of God's flock of sheep, true Elders must be surrendered to move slowly, to proceed with difficulty, and to advance cautiously, with difficulty, through the unplowed soil of the minds of God's people.

True Elders must be willing to offer upon God's altar of sacrifice the heavy, painful pants of their labouring breath, as they pray and teach the Word and doctrine so that the spiritual family will hear the joyful sound of Truth and see the glorious Light of Truth.

Being willing to labour slowly, plodding on through the darkness of carnal minds in order to bring the people's hearts to the radiating Light of Christ's Healing Wings is a necessity for true Elders.

After they have planted the Seeds of Truth in the hearts and minds of God's people, true Elders must also be

willing to work labouriously and persistently in cultivating these Seeds. The true Elder must be faithful to investigate and to follow up, perseveringly, the growth of plants in believers' spiritual gardens. The Elder must labour diligently with steady, sturdy strokes of the pruning knife, cutting off the wild, unrestrained growth of fruitless sucker branches in order to see mature fruitfulness attained in saints' spiritual gardens..

To labour is to work in either a corporeal action or a mental action. When one considers the Elder's exertion of muscular and mental strength, the heart's toil in prayer, the hard work of counseling, with its pain and trouble, a congregation never can repay a true Elder for his worth.

There is no way a congregation can reward, recompense, or repay a true Elder for the expenditure of his or her life. A congregation cannot pay with carnal dollars and cents the equivalent of the eternal spiritual service they receive from a true Elder. Therefore, a true Elder must wait until Eternity for real remunerative justice from the LORD. However, congregations are to do the best they can in giving their Elders natural remuneration under the circumstances, according to the Will of God.

God's *Torah* demands natural remuneration even for a natural ox that serves in his master's natural kingdom. How much better is a true Elder than an ox?

The oxen that trod out the corn were paid because they could feed as they worked. The more they worked, the more they could eat. Therefore, let true Elders who labour in the Word and Doctrine be well-provided for, according to their work and according to God's Will.

Nor scrip for *your* journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: **for the workman is worthy of his meat** (Matthew 10:10).

The true labourer certainly is worthy of his reward. God's *Torah* forbids an earthly master to hinder an ox from eating the produce with which it works.

The earthly master was forbidden to shout at the ox while it was eating because his shout would immediately prohibit the ox from eating. God provided for the animals to be rewarded according to their natural labours by allowing them to eat all the time they were working, either the fruits that had not yet been cut or the fruits after they had been cut.

Under the law, God made specific provision for the oxen that trod out the natural corn or bread which perishes. Under the Gospel, He also made specific provision for the true Elder, the spiritual ox, who breaks the Living Bread of Truth which endures forever.

Those who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel.

Even so hath the Lord ordained that **they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel** (I Corinthians 9:14).

Remuneration is God's specific provision for His Elders, and it is the just due of His faithful servants.

Those who are stingy with God's servants and who try to starve them out of the ministry certainly will give an account before God's Judgment Seat in the future.

## **2. Congregations Must not Accuse Worthy Elders Without Two or Three Credible Witnesses.**

The second natural honour that God commands to be given an Elder is that the congregation is not to receive an accusation against an Elder without two or three credible witnesses confirming the accusation. The accusation must not be a fleeting, foggy report, but a precisely defined, certain charge. A person is not to listen, alone, while another person is performing the act of charging an Elder with a crime or even with a lighter delinquency. One is not to sit idly by while another person complains and finds fault with a sincere Elder. Accusations are leveled at the very existence of the Elder and are forms of betrayal unless proven by two or three credible witnesses.

The accusers must face the accused face to face. Even in a natural court of law, when one conducts a lawsuit, he must bring the person who is accused of wrongdoing before the proper authorities and prove his accusations. The law provides that a civil or criminal charge that is brought against an accused one must be viewed by proper authorities so that the accused one can obtain a redress. Even the guilty criminal has the privilege to represent his cause in a court of law and to receive his punishment from a judicial tribunal. Hence, man in the natural realm is not condemned until he has been tried by a judicial tribunal and proven guilty. How much greater caution should be

taken in God's House with His Elders?

No one person has the prerogative to condemn or to punish anyone, much less one of God's Elders, until sufficient proof has been produced of his guilt. The guilt and punishment of God's Elders must be established and carried out by their superiors, not by their inferiors. Therefore, the accusation against an Elder must be well-founded and well-proven. Any reports of improper and immoral behaviour by an Elder should be given to that Elder's superiors. An Elder's testimony, reputation, and ministry is not to be damaged, injured, nor destroyed on the grounds of uncertain surmises or unproven reports.

### **3. Congregations Must Publicly Defend Worthy Elders Before All Who May Slander Them.**

Innocent Elders deserve to be defended. Those who slanderously backbite an Elder must be rebuked before all. We are duty-bound, both spiritually and naturally, to give honour to our Elders by publicly rebuking those who publicly slander them. For example, if a member of the congregation hears a person slandering his Elders while in the presence of others, that member needs to stand up right then and publicly defend the Elder. Worthy Elders deserve to receive our natural and spiritual honour by having those who are falsely accusing them receive severe reproofs and reprimands. If a person is sufficiently evil to deal damaging blows of false accusations against an Elder, someone else should be good enough to deal the counterblows of defense to honour the Elder.

Honourable rebukes to those who are guilty of false accusations against an Elder are preventive helps that will go a long way in checking and restraining the pernicious disease of slanderous corruption in the House of God.

Honourable public rebuke is a dreaded correction, chastisement, and punishment for the guilty. False and slanderous accusations are part of the misery of the false image of mortality. However, the sharp, slanderous tongue of the false accuser must be dulled, blunted, and rebuked because of its evil, reprehensible, and disgraceful nature.

Those who sin publicly against an Elder must be rebuked publicly. The public bondage of rebuke must be as broad and as long as the public wound. Therefore, those who are in danger of sinning by following the slanderous, evil example of the false accuser will be warned to fear God and to turn from their wicked, persecuting ways.

Public rebuke is designed for others so that they may learn to fear God and not follow the pernicious ways of false accusers. Consequently, public offenders must be publicly rebuked and publicly punished.

God's Word warns against someone doing harm and injury to His anointed servants.

***Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm*** (Psalm 105:15).

God reproveth heathen kings who threatened his beloved Elders, the Patriarchs. He warned them not to touch His anointed ones. God has appointed His anointed ones to represent Him in this earth and to be the extension of His Throne or Ruling Power in this earth.

Mortal kings and rulers regard themselves as the monarchs of this world, but God's true anointed ones are the real, true spiritual rulers of this world. Therefore, God demands that heathen kings and rulers of this world give them the honour that is due them. The monarchs of this world may refuse to honour God's anointed ones now, but in the world to come, they will have to comply with God's demands to do so (Revelation 3:9).

If God demands heathen kings to honour His anointed Elders, surely, then, He requires His own spiritual household to give more honour to His Elders. Take the example of Jacob, for instance. In a dream, God warned Laban not to do harm to Elder Jacob. Also, God smote Pharaoh and Abimelech because they dishonoured Elder Abraham by overstepping their authority in trying to take Sarah away from him.

Since Elders are God's Prophets, He expects both heathen and Christians to honour them with reverence and respect.

True Elders always have served the sole, unique LORD God in the midst of an immoral and idolatrous world. Therefore, God always has warned the heathen in all generations not to injuriously touch His anointed ones and not to behave harmfully toward His Prophets.

Members of God's family get even stronger prophetic warnings than others concerning the harmful touching of His sanctified Elders.

Elders and teachers who commune with God, and whose primary duty and responsibility is the spiritual education of God's "school children," are protected by God's forbidding anyone to touch them in a harmful way.

God's true Elders have stood alone in the midst of a society that is given to a profusion of overflowing immorality and idolatry. However, true Elders count it a privilege to stand alone, leaning on the elongated and extended Name

of the LORD, while serving God in a morally sanctified manner. True Elders consider it a distinctive honour to proclaim the Name of the Father, the LORD God, and the Son, the LORD Jesus Christ, and to make the Truth known. Therefore, God honours His true Elders by surrounding them with His protective fence of *El Shadday*, and He warns all others to keep their harmful hands off His servants.

Since they are reliable examples, true Elders demonstrate to their congregations how to serve God by encouraging the congregation to follow in their footsteps. If Elders remain true to their unique divine calling, it is a certainty that the LORD will raise up sincere ones to follow, faithfully and loyally, in their footsteps.

However, if someone thinks or knows that a local Elder or Pastor has fallen into sin, it is that person's duty and responsibility before God to report the matter to the district Elder or to the Bishop so that they can deal properly with the matter. God is not partial in dealing with sin; rather, He is faithful to deal with sin, both in the pulpit and in the pew. God is not a respecter of persons in His dealings with sin, whether it be an Elder or a member of the congregation.

Nevertheless, remember this: Elders are worthy of double honour if they are ruling by standing and by leaning on the Rod of the elongated and extended Name of the LORD. Therefore, Elders are worthy of the spiritual honour of being esteemed, dignified, and being considered precious and beloved by God's people. Elders are also worthy of the natural honour of having God's people pay them for their work, by being protected against evil accusations, and by being powerfully and publicly defended by having all evil, accusing, and slanderous surmisers rebuked.

# Chapter Three

## The Congregation's Duties And Responsibilities To Their Elders

God did not put all the duty and responsibility upon the shoulders of the Elders and leave the congregation free to do as they please. God's Word records specific duties and responsibilities that He requires of His people in their relationship with His ruling Elders.

### I. The Congregation Must Remember Those Who Have the Rule Over Them.

The first command God gives the congregation, as they walk under the rule of the Elders who are to lead them, is to remember those (Elders) who have the rule over them.

Let us consider the subject of memory or remembrance so that we can learn to respect its awesomeness and also learn to fear and obey God.

In man's body, his sense of hearing is known as the ear. In his soul, his sense of hearing is the memory or remembering; and in man's spirit, his sense of hearing is reverence that is to be used for reverencing the LORD.

The memory in man's soul is a receptacle and sheath for all knowledge. Man's memory is a treasurer that receives funds or knowledge upon which he can draw in the time of need.

Many complain of the lack of ability to remember, when actually the problem or the defect is in their *desire* to remember, plus their *lack of reverence* for what is said to them.

An individual's memory holds everything so that nothing is actually ever forgotten. Neither does the LORD ever forget anything we have done, unless it is a sin that has been confessed, repented of, and put under the Blood of Jesus Christ. Only then does the LORD forget it by putting it in the Sea of Forgetfulness. These Truths make the memory an awesome function of our minds. Our spoken words are also an eternal witness for or against us. An evil oath or curse that is uttered continues to vibrate through all time, in the wide-spreading current of sound, unless it is retrieved through repentance and placed, by faith, under the precious Blood of Christ.

Memory is God's Judgment Book. This Book will be opened at God's Great White Throne of Judgment, at Christ's Judgment Seat, and at Christ's Judgment Throne when He returns again.

As believers, we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ to give an account of what we have done in our bodies.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and **the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works** (Revelation 20:11,12).

When these particular persons, referred to in the Book of Revelation, stand before the Father, the LORD God, at His Great White Throne of Judgment, their memory books will be opened. Every person will be judged out of those things written in their own memory books. God will cause the Memory Books to be opened by regenerating the sense of memory within each person so that they will remember every thought, word, and deed, whether good or evil, that they have thought and done in this life. Therefore, God will judge them according to what He finds within their memory books.

Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. **For we must all appear**

**before the judgment seat of Christ;** that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad (II Corinthians 5:9,10).

But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? **for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.** For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way (Romans 14:10-13).

Paul warns us that we must labour to be accepted of the LORD. He does not present any encouragement or hope of security for the slothful and sinful. We are to labour to be accepted of the LORD, whether we live or die.

When Christ opens our memory books, they will be congruous with the LORD's Memory Book. The LORD will not have to accuse us or our enemies in the Day of Judgment because our thoughts and deeds, recorded in our memory books, will be our own accusers. The LORD's Memory Book will only confirm the things written in our own memory book unless we have repented and allowed the Blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse the pages of our memory books.

The awesomeness of this Truth should excite us and persuade us to repent of every conscious wrong in our memories and ask the LORD to open our subconscious memory books so that we can repent now, thereby cleansing our memory books.

Likewise, when Christ returns again to earth, He will separate the sheep from the goats. He will say to the sheep on His right hand, "I was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, and a prisoner, and you ministered to my needs." The sheep will ask, "When did we do these things?" And, the LORD will open their memory books, confirming that His Judgment is based upon the things contained within their memory books.

Furthermore, Christ will say to the goats on His left hand, "I was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, and a prisoner, and you did not minister to my needs." The goats will ask, "Did we not do these things?" The LORD will also open their memory books, confirming that His Judgment is based upon the things contained within their memory books.

The terror of the Judgment Day is the dread book of accounts, the memory book, of each individual. Although there may be many veils placed between the present consciousness of memory and the secret inscriptions written on the walls of our subconscious memory, God will rend the veils and open the book of inscriptions, revealing the pages of our memories.

Memory is a tenacious and magnetic tool. It grabs, retains, and records all things that pass its way, both the good and the evil.

The precious Blood of Jesus Christ is the only substance that can produce true forgetfulness in the memory because it has the Power to wash away evil and sin from our memory books so that its pages are left empty and clean, ready to be filled up with good things. Only good things will be ever remembered after we have confessed our sins, repented of them, and put them away.

The sense of memory is an awesome channel within man. He can use it either for good or for evil.

When we think upon the Name of the LORD in special praises, thanksgiving, and prayers, the LORD has a special Book of Remembrance written in our honour.

Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard *it*, **and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.** And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him (Malachi 3:16,17).

When those who have loving, reverential fear of the LORD's Name gather together, they kindle, new, holy flames of zeal and love for the LORD in each other. The LORD has a Book of Remembrance written to preserve the memory of these kinds of precious jewels. So, when He comes to gather His jewels, He will be sure that these precious jewels will be among His private collection because He will have preserved their memories in His Book.

Likewise, God has commanded His children to remember His Elders whom He has given to rule over them.

If God uses special Books to confirm to Himself those of us who remember His Name and to honour us for our good deeds, should we not also use our pens in some special way to help us remember the good deeds that our

Elders have done and are doing to help us know Christ Jesus in a greater way?  
Let us not forget that God created our memory books for good, not for evil.

**Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God:** whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation (Hebrews 13:7).

The sheep of God's pasture must bring or call back to their mind or memory the unceasing work of their Elders who have governed and guided them in the way of Truth. This is important, and it is imperative that the sheep recollect how well-nigh spiritual starvation they were when the faithful Elders found them and ministered unto them the Life-giving Stature of Jesus Christ. For their own good, the sheep (the saints) must preserve unforgotten (not forget nor let slip) the condition and circumstances of their spiritual poverty when the faithful Elders found them and presented them with the Stature of Jesus Christ and the Prize of being in His Bride.

Grateful remembrance continually constrains a person's heart and mind to be constantly thoughtful, reverent, and respectful toward his or her faithful Elders.

Grateful remembrance of true Elders' labourious work in the Word and doctrine constrains a person to hold them in great favour, affection, and appreciation because they have poured out their lives as a living sacrifice as they have fed their sheep.

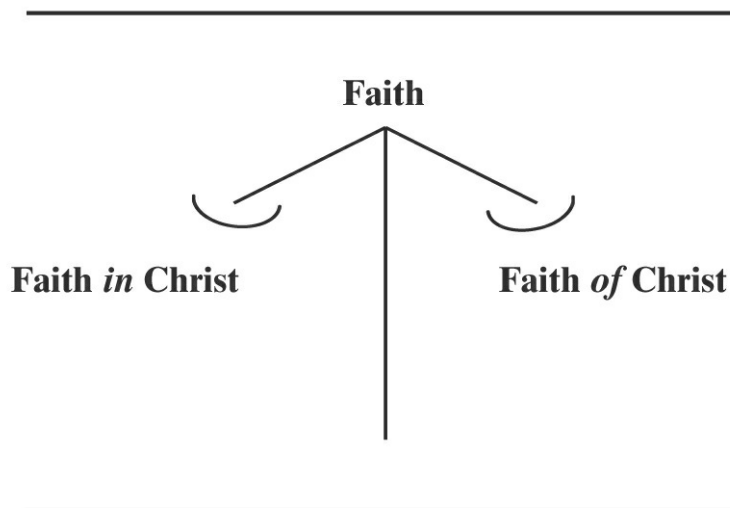
First, the congregation always should bear in mind Jesus' unparalleled sacrifice at Calvary's Cross; second, they should take into consideration the sacrifice of His obedient servants, the Elders.

Members of a congregation should give certain citations of respect and gratitude to their Elders as the Spirit of the LORD leads them. They should be ready and willing to present emblems of respect and regard to their Elders. When mentioning their Elders, the congregation always should compliment them with words of respect and gratitude because they have a duty and responsibility to exercise the faculty of their memories in regard to their Elders labours of love and sacrifice for Christ's sake.

The obedience and obligation that the congregation has toward the under-shepherd, the Elder, is to remember that the Elder has ruled by leading in preaching, in praying, in private counsel, and in meting out Christ's Love to the members of his congregation. The duty of the congregation is to follow the under-shepherd, the Elder, who is following the great Head, the mighty King, the eternal High Priest and Bishop of their souls — the LORD Jesus Christ.

Members of the Elder's flock are to remember the Elder's example and imitate him in the sincerity and purity of his faith in the true Word and doctrine that he has preached, which, if he were a true Elder, was free from all human additions and inventions. The congregation is to imitate the firmness and stability of the faith of their true Elder, not suffering themselves to be shaken or tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine.

The Faith *of* Christ is as changeless and immutable as Christ Himself. Therefore, let us serve Christ, not with just our faith *in* Christ, but let us press on in our spiritual education until we lay hold of the Faith *of* Christ.



Our faith *in* Christ is oftentimes changeable, according to how we feel at the time. However, the Faith *of* Christ is as changeless as Christ Himself.

Without faith *in* Christ and the Faith *of* Christ, we will be useless in God's Eternal Kingdom. Remember, uselessness leads to everlasting oblivion.

The special duty to which the congregational members are summoned is to remember Elders' labours in the Word and doctrine and to obey and submit to them.

## II. The Congregation Must Obey Elders Who Have the Rule Over Them.

Second, God commands the congregation to obey their Elders.

**Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves:** for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you (Hebrews 13:17).

Obeying an Elder indicates a quality or state of being obedient; dutiful submission to authority and restraint; or compliance with a command, prohibition, or direction. When required or directed by authority to do something, a congregation should be ready to obey without fretting, murmuring, resenting, and complaining within their hearts or with their mouths.

If a person is obeying a direction because he is doing it willingly from his heart, his attitude will be manifested and demonstrated by his words and actions, and he will exhibit respect, reverence, and dutifulness.

God requires that His sheep practice both passive and active obedience toward His servants, the Elders. Passive obedience consists of unqualified obedience or submission to the direction, leading, and authority of the Elders, according to the Word and doctrine of the LORD. Passive obedience or non-resistance to the authority of an Elder is an important requisite for individuals in order for a true Elder to rule them by leading them onward in their spiritual journey. If individuals are unwilling to be submissive to the authority, restraint, control, and directions of their superior, then the Elder is powerless to continue leading such rebellious individuals. However, it is the God-given responsibility of the congregation to be dutiful and compliant toward their Elder.

Submission is part of the second command God gives to the congregation. All obedience has its roots in submission.

The act of submitting willingly from the heart and will is the deepest form of obedience. The congregation's submission acknowledges their inferiority and their dependence on God's under-shepherds, the Elders, to rule over them by leading them onward and upward in their spiritual education and in their moral development.

An individual's humble, grateful words and suppliant behaviour toward his Elder exhibit his submissive obedience.

When an Elder, the under-shepherd, points out the faults and failures of the sheep, the sheep quickly will acknowledge the Truth if he is submissively obedient.

The sheep's *submission* to God and to His ordained Elder should be more extreme than his *offenses* were to God and to His appointed Elder.

True submission is putting God the Father in His rightful place as the eternal Cause and putting His only Begotten Son, the LORD Jesus, in His rightful place as the redemptive Effect of all things.

When we say, "My will, not Thine be done," we turn the paradise of our heart into a waste and howling desert of hatred, sadness, and strife. When we say, "Thy will, not mine be done," we turn the waste and howling desert of our heart into a paradise of lush growth and fruitfulness of love, joy, and peace.

When we gratefully accept whatever the LORD does, according to His Purposive Will — for us, with us, or through us — it is the beginning of His eternal Paradise in us. No matter how dark the nights, how deep the valleys, how high the mountains, how intense the pain, or how fierce the battles through which His Grace leads us, through it all, the LORD's overshadowing Glory is as sure as His Grace.

The LORD's Glory and Grace clothes His Will, so we are assured that the garden of our hearts will be planted with the tender plants of His Love, Joy, and Peace that satisfy every longing of our hearts if we willingly and cheerfully submit to His Holy Will and assume the responsibilities and duties that He has allocated for us in this life.

When filled with the disease of rebellion, people's minds make them refuse to bend their necks and incline their shoulders to crouch beneath their God-given load of responsibility. Hence, they will not bear their load without

miserably murmuring, fretting, and complaining.

A resigned, submissive will to God's Holy Will causes a person to calmly glide through the roughest events and the saddest situations of this life with a happy heart and with a joyful mouth full of praise and thanksgiving to the eternal Cause and to the everlasting redemptive Effect.

When a person is submissive to the LORD and to His Elders, his heart and will can be neither miserable nor offended in the midst of life's circumstances.

Great peace have **they which love thy law**: and **nothing shall offend them** (Psalm 119:165).

Christ gives His divine Wisdom to the person who has a submissive heart and will, enabling him to entwine all his choices with the divine, infinite Choices and Will of God. Submissiveness joins us to the LORD's Holy Will that is both omniscient and omnipotent; then, we neither can be deceived nor defeated. As a result, we receive the best for Time and Eternity — the Prize of being in the Bride of Jesus Christ.

Remember, this life is but a drama, and we are chosen to be actors on the stage of life. God the Father is the Cause, and Christ Jesus, the Son, is the Author of the story of redemption for our life. Therefore, let us perform our act well, whether it be the part of a ruling Elder or the part of a lamb or sheep in his pasture. God has given us the part best suited to His Will and to us. Let us, therefore, take heed and submit to God's Will in our lives.

Take note that, in the midst of need, calamities, and fate we can conquer by cheerfully yielding to God's Will. With our wills submissive to God's Will, we are able to ride out the storm, wind, and rain until a new rainbow of light and glory ushers in a new day.

A new day generates hope and happiness afresh and anew in our hearts when our wills are submissive to the LORD's Will. When we bow in humble submission and resignation to the Sun of Righteousness, the only source of Light that has radiating rays of healing, the deadliest gloom and the most devastating fear must flee away.

As a salve, the balm of submission heals the chastening, pruning wounds the Father, the Husbandman, gives the branch when He cuts off its fruitless, unrestrained sucker branches in order to bring new growth.

We cannot be submissive to God's Will and know tranquility of mind and happiness as long as we are playing fallen Lucifer's role as the owner and the master. Joy, peace, and happiness come when we arrive at the depths and heights of understanding and knowledge that ALL *external* things and *internal* things belong to the Almighty LORD God, Who is the Owner and the Master of all. When we cheerfully commit all things in sweet surrender to Him, we begin to experience love, joy, and peace that passeth all understanding.

When our human will ceases to wish mournfully for events and situations to happen as we desire, and begins to wish joyfully for events and situations to happen as the LORD desires, it is a sign that the human will has entered into a restful, holy, happy matrimony with the LORD Jesus Christ's Will and the Heavenly Father's Will. Oh, happy day!

We should pray for the LORD to help us in our moral development by teaching us how to be more compliant with the commands and wishes of our superiors, the Elders.

A humble, submissive heart and will always are ready, disposed, and willing to submit meekly and to yield lovingly to God's order of established Power and Authority.

On the other hand, a person with a proud, arrogant, and presumptuous heart and mind stays in a state of continual resistance and rebellion against God's established Authority, Rulership, and Governance.

God has appointed an Elder the responsibility of ruling by leading and watching for the souls of the people. He has given Elders a collection of laws and commands, according to His Purposive Will, by which Elders are obligated to live and to serve God's flock. Assuming the governance and guidance of people's eternal welfare is an awesome responsibility. It is a responsibility that no one would want to assume apart from God's Master Plan and Purposive Will.

Elders must stay spiritually awake, not only for their own souls, but for the souls of God's flock. There are times, also, that Elders must continue without natural sleep because they are keeping prayerful vigils for the saints. Watchful Elders keep vigilant observation, take notice carefully, and give attentive heed to the spiritual needs of God's flocks. Elders are watchmen in all things that affect the spiritual welfare of the souls of God's people. They look to see the proper pace to take in leading each sheep. Patiently and painfully, Elders help those who are unable to walk, carrying them on their shoulders or in their bosoms until they are able to walk and keep pace with the rest of the flock. Those who are slow in learning to walk and keep pace find that under-shepherds help them to look forward with expectation to faster and longer steps in Christ Jesus.

By night, faithful Elders watch and act as nurses and attendants over the sick. True Elders remain awake so that they might sit all night to watch, to give attendance, to give assistance, and to serve the sheep who are in need. A sheep has a blessed privilege when he is in the pasture of a true Elder who watches the sheep with close attention, keeping them constantly and carefully in view and under supervision in order to help protect them against thieves and robbers who would steal their lives and spiritual treasures. By being loyal to God and His flock, an Elder keeps a sharp lookout over God's heritage, and with a vigilant eye, he observes the condition of the souls of God's flock.

True Elders always are aware that there are "Watchers" from the skies watching them as they watch the sheep.

The night Christ was born, natural shepherds watched their natural flocks, while "Watchers" (Angels) in the skies watched the shepherds. Likewise, the "Watchers" in the skies always watch spiritual shepherds who faithfully keep watch over God's spiritual flocks.

Sometimes spiritual flocks are like natural children who resent the vigilant, cautious, and wary eye of the parent. True parents, both naturally and spiritually, always practice diligent and careful observation, guarding against all dangers, mistakes, and misconduct that would be harmful and destructive to their children. God strongly exhorts Elders to use extreme carefulness and watchfulness with His sheep.

Instead of resenting and rebelling against Elders' care and concern for us, we should be grateful that God provides Elders who care enough to watch for our souls.

God does not require that we remember either the gifts with which we are endowed or the attainments and achievements by which we are distinguished. Neither does God summon His sheep to bear in mind the great learning and knowledge that an Elder possesses nor the great eloquence with which he preaches. God does not require us to fasten our minds on the personal, peculiar, distinctive traits or characteristics of an Elder, but to remember, gratefully, the Word and doctrine he has taught us and how he has ruled by leading his flock. Remember, the whole purpose of existence of an Elder is to make known the Cause of the Father and the redemptive Effects of the Son, and to be an example that the congregation can follow.

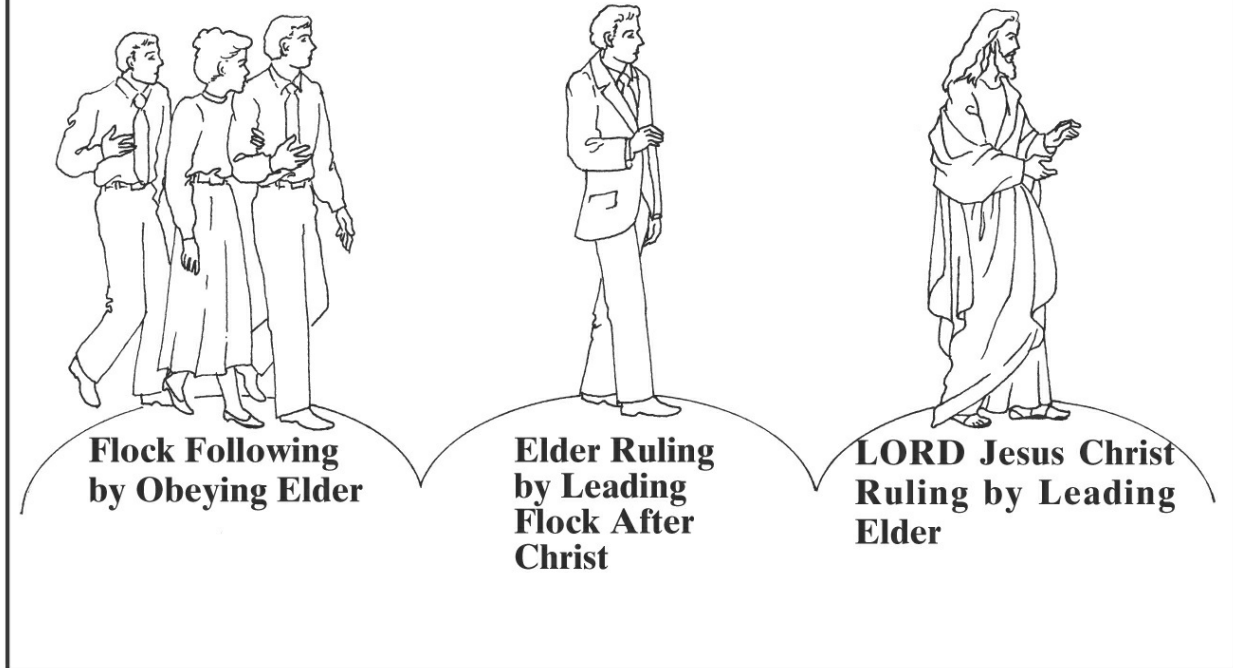
A congregation must obey a true Elder who has the rule over them. This is important!

The duty of the church members is to obey their Rulers, the Elders, in the discharge of their office. The congregation's obedience to their Elder constitutes one of the chief reasons for order, peace, harmony, and the moving of God's Spirit among God's flock.

Those who rise up from the flock with presumptuous arrogance to try to take the right, power, and authority from the Elder of the flock have a pernicious cancer in themselves, so they corrupt themselves and the flock of God.

The true Elder who serves the flock with conscience and diligence has no greater joy in this world than seeing his flock obey the Word and doctrine that he has preached to them. On the other hand, when presumptuous rebellors rise up against the Elder, he knows no greater sorrow than when the flock or part of the flock disobeys the Word and doctrine that he has preached to them.

## The LORD's Purposive Will



Both the Elder and the people have reciprocal duties.

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**Duty of the Elder:  
to Rule  
by Leading**

**Duty of the People:  
to Follow Elder  
by Obeying**

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Duty begets duty. While God requires Elders to rule over the people and to watch for their souls, He requires the people to return obedience and submission to the Elder.

The people's duty is to join with the goal and aim of the true Elder in making the Truth of God's Word known and in lifting up the mighty, forceful Name of the LORD Jesus Christ.

The people must bear with the importunity and solicitude of their Elder in watching for their souls and not take offense at the Elder's plain speaking or strong admonitions.

The Sovereign God Who imposes the duty of ruling and watching upon the Elder is the same Sovereign God Who imposes the duty of obeying and submitting upon the people.

To fulfill their duty and obligation, the people must unite with the Elders when they have pointed out particular

sins of immorality, ungodliness, wrong attitudes, lack of cooperation, and backbiting among the members of the congregation. To fulfill their responsibilities, the sheep must follow and support the Elders in their endeavours to lead the flock in striding forward according to God's Will. Remember, the same God Who prescribes the duty of the Elders also prescribes the duty of the sheep. The souls of the sheep are offsprings of God; therefore, as their Owner and Master, He has the right to say who is to rule over them and watch over their souls. The existence of sheep's souls originates in God, the Cause, and since the salvation of their souls was obtained at the costly price of Christ's shedding His precious Blood at Calvary, God the Father and the LORD Jesus Christ have to be highly concerned about the Elders whom they have ordained to rule and watch over the sheep's souls. Hence, if the Elders have to give an unfavourable, grievous account to their Owner, Master, and Redeemer, it is very unprofitable for those disobedient, intractable, and rebellious sheep.

A true Elder has a special love for the immortal, redeemed souls who belong to the Father and to the Son, which is manifested in continual attention to their interest and in constant devotedness to their welfare. Remember, Christ Jesus has not employed Elders who are strangers to His redemption and to the measure of His Stature. God has not selected Elders who are enemies to Christ and who strive and war against the Cause of the Father. But, Christ calls and chooses those who are friends and who love Him.

Serving the LORD of Glory and His flock, as a loving friend, is a joyful ministry. What a glorious, happy satisfaction a true Elder has when he can give a joyful account to the LORD for the growth and obedience of the flock. The congregation's spiritual condition witnesses that the labours of the Elder have not been in vain but that they are successful.

Remember, one's resistance, rebellion, and disobedience may grieve an Elder, breaking his heart, weakening his physical strength through long hours of intercession, travail, and concern, and filling his mind with distressful disappointment! But his distressful disappointment is the rebel's ruin! While a rebel's disobedience may grieve the Elder, it will destroy the rebel.

If we obey orders from physicians in the natural realm by taking bitter medicine for the sake of our health and well-being, we should obey the orders of our spiritual physicians, the Elders, by taking their bitter medicines of sharp reproofs and stinging rebukes for the sake of our souls' spiritual health. True Elders watch for the souls of men — not to kill them like a hunter — but to minister life to them through God's Word and doctrine. Therefore, the sheep of God's pasture should assume their duty to remember the Elders who have the rule over them, giving implicit obedience and absolute submission to them, as long as the Elders continue to follow the LORD Jesus Christ in all sincerity and Truth.

Elders must not behave like lords over God's heritage, but must lead the sheep in the ways of Truth through instruction, teaching, preaching, and explanations of God's Word. Elders are not sent to write new laws but to interpret God's Spiritual Laws and Principles of Truth.

The LORD sends Elders to give their lives to feed the sheep, as Christ Jesus gave His Life to save the sheep.

So when they had dined, **Jesus saith to Simon Peter**, Simon, *son of Jonas*, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. **He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.** He saith to him again the second time, Simon, *son of Jonas*, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. **He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.** He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son of Jonas*, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. **Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep** (John 21:15-17).

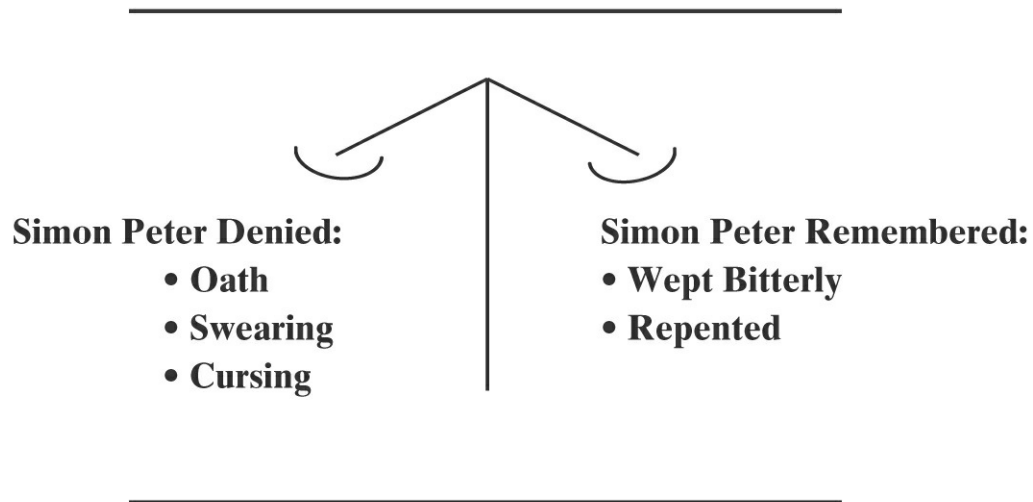
In the beginning of Simon Peter's ministry as an Elder, he was ashamed of the LORD, the true Bread of Life from Heaven. Therefore, three times Peter denied the true Bread of Life, although he vainly boasted of his great love for the true Bread and vowed that he never would forsake Him. Later, when Peter was called upon to fellowship the suffering of the breaking of the true Bread at Christ's crucifixion, he found that his love for the true Bread was tremendously insufficient. So, along with all the other Elders or Apostles, he denied and forsook the LORD.

After His Resurrection, the LORD had to establish Peter's love for the true Bread before He asked him, as Elder, to take that Bread and feed it to His lambs and sheep.

Christ Jesus, the risen LORD, projected a dual question to Simon Peter. The connotation of Jesus' first question to Simon was this: Did Peter love the true Bread more than his intimate friends, more than his boats and nets, more than the pleasure of fishing, and more than the profits and gains of his profession?

The connotation of Jesus' second question to Simon was this: Did Peter still boast in a vainglorious manner that he loved the true Bread more than all the other Disciples loved it?

Simon, in a humble attitude, confessed three times that he loved the LORD Jesus Christ more than all the delights of his fishing, more than all the profits of his fishing, and truly more than all the Disciples did. Simon Peter, the Elder, had more reason to love the true Bread than all the other Elders because he had been forgiven much more than they. He had sinned more than they. He had greatly sinned by denying the LORD by an oath, by swearing, and by cursing.



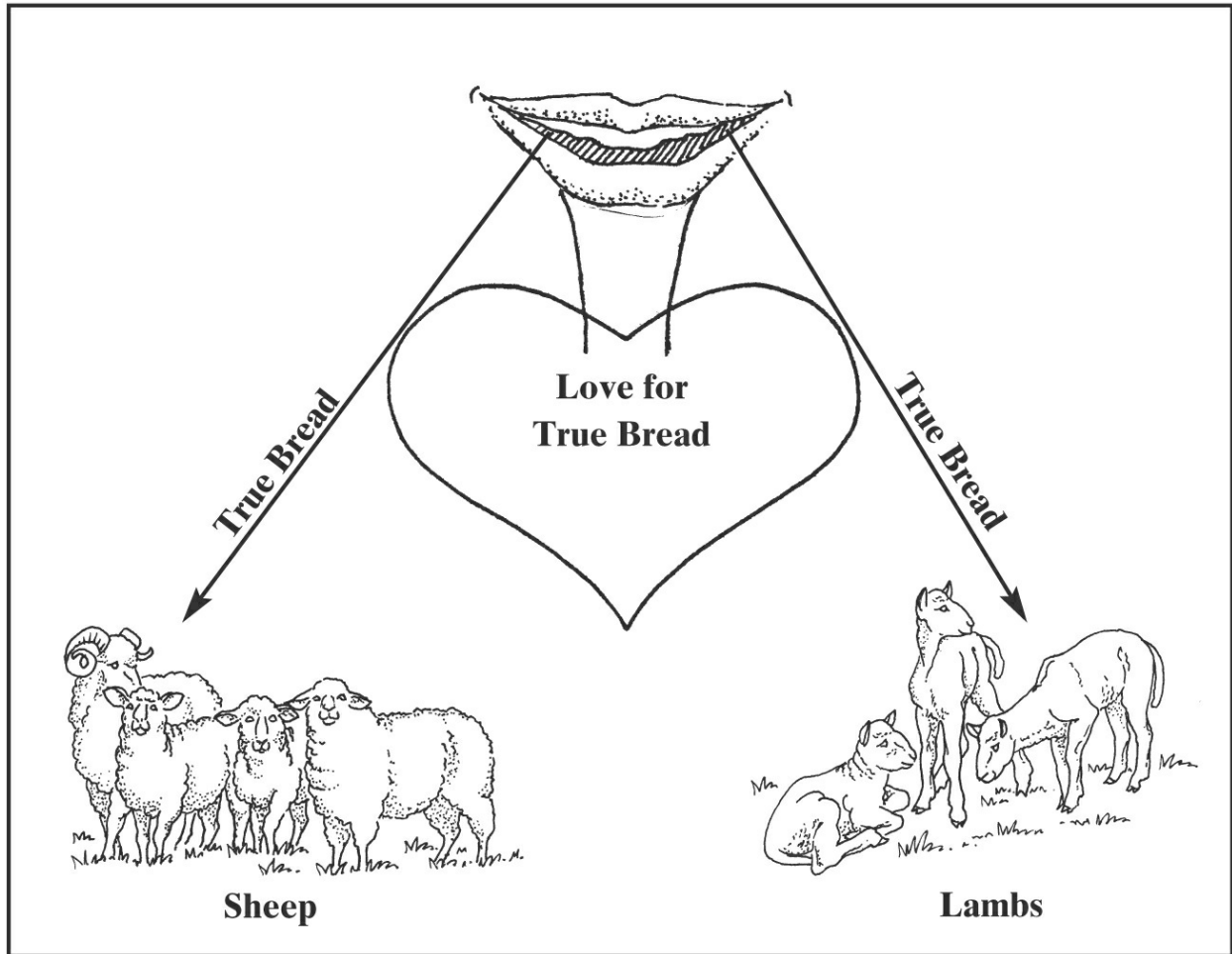
But, when Simon Peter wept and repented, he had a greater reason to love Jesus more than the others because he had been forgiven more than they.

And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, **which of them will love him most?** Simon answered and said, I suppose that *he*, **to whom he forgave most.** And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged (Luke 7:42,43).

The greater the sin, the greater the pardon, and the greater the stream of love and gratitude that flows from the newly cleansed heart.

We do not need to go out and deliberately commit sin in order to be forgiven much. We need only to behold, by the Spirit of God, the unChrist-like flesh that we have inherited from Adam the First, and we will see great things that necessitate confession and repentance. Then, we, too, will be overflowing with the fruit and proofs of love for our precious LORD.

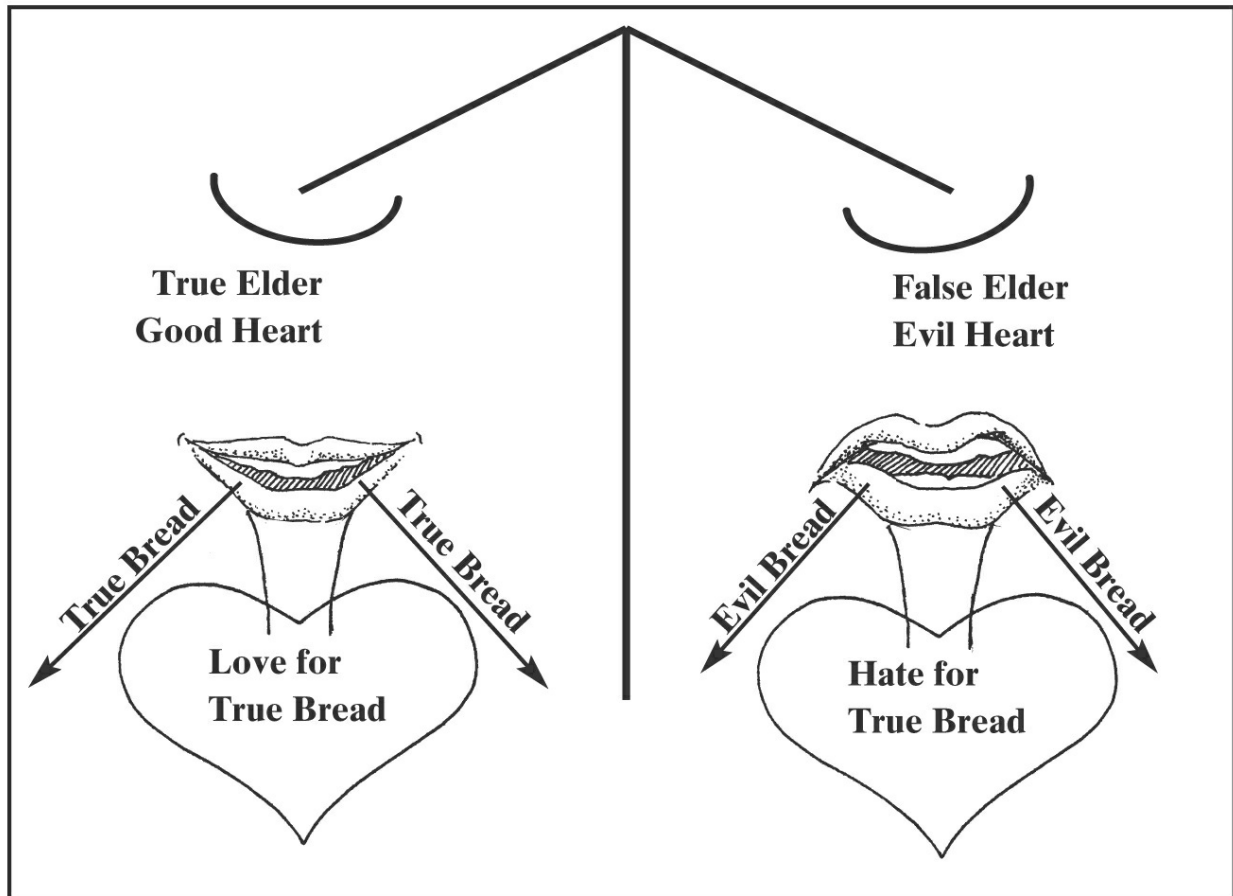
The risen LORD Jesus Christ did not give Elder Simon the responsibility of feeding his lambs and sheep with the true Bread until He firmly had established, three times, Elder Simon's personal love for the true Bread.



The mouth can speak only what is fed to it from the heart.

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for **of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh** (Luke 6:45).

The heart is a treasure house that either stores up love for the true Bread or hate for the true Bread.



The LORD Jesus Christ loved this world of sinners so much that He gave His Life's Blood to save them and to convert them into lambs and sheep so that He might lead them as flocks to His green Pastures.

The LORD Jesus Christ not only gave His Life's Blood to save, to cleanse, and to provide spiritual Drink for His flocks, but He gave His Body, the true Bread from Heaven, to be broken at Calvary's Cross in order to provide Life-giving Blood for His flocks.

The LORD only deposits this precious Substance of His Life-giving Food and Drink in a good, clean heart that has an established love for the true Bread and the true Drink. Therefore, because of Christ's great Love for His lambs and sheep, He wants them fed. So He raises up true Elders, having good, clean hearts that have a personal love for the Bread and the sheep, as Simon Peter had after he had been forgiven and restored.

The heart is the only treasure house that a man or an Elder possesses. Hence, they either can choose the Blood of Jesus for cleansing and the true Bread of Jesus for personal feeding and sharing with others, or they can choose to remain with the evil heart of Adam the First with its noxious food of the flesh to personally feed on and share with others.

The LORD is so good to raise up true Elders who personally have good, clean hearts and a personal love for the true Bread, which is proven by their sharing the true Bread to feed the lambs and sheep of the LORD's flock. It is the duty and responsibility of the true Elder to supply the LORD's flock with the true Bread which gives true spiritual nourishment to the spirits and souls of the lambs and the sheep. A supply of the nourishing, Life-giving Bread of Jesus is necessary for the continued existence of the lambs and sheep. There must be a constant consumption of the true Spiritual Bread and Drink in order for an Elder to maintain his existence and to maintain the existence of the flock.

Elders must find gratifying pleasure and delight in the true Bread, or they will feed their brain-sick fits of lust with the evil bread of the flesh, which will lead them into the enemy's noxious fields of worldly weeds. When Elders stray from the true Bread and the true Pasture, they lead God's flock to indulge in the same noxious fields of worldly weeds.

Jesus' true Bread strengthens the will, the heart, and the mind in the glorious hope and expectation of liberation from the flesh and of attaining the Prize of being in the Bride of the LORD Jesus Christ.

Jesus' true Bread causes Spiritual Stature to grow and bones to be made fat, supporting and maintaining the new Life that He gives.

Because the LORD gives the Bread to His true Elders, He demands that the lambs and the sheep obey and submit themselves to their Elders.

### **III. The Congregation Must Salute Elders Who Have the Rule Over Them.**

The third command that God gave the congregation, which they must obey under the rule of the Elders who are to lead them, is for the congregation to salute them.

**Salute all them that have the rule over you**, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you (Hebrews 13:24).

To *salute* an Elder means to offer a salutation of greetings; welcome; to address with sincere expressions of kind wishes; courtesy and reverence. A sincere salutation may consist of a holy kiss, a wave of the hand, or grateful words of welcome and appreciation. Or it may be an expression of kind words of love and respect. The act of sincerely saluting an Elder consists of paying respect and reverence to him, either by words of appreciation or by deeds of love.

The congregation is duty-bound by the LORD, their Owner and Master, to salute their Elder with some form of kind expression of respect and reverence.

The conclusion of the whole matter of Elders and their congregations is for them to fear God and keep His Commandments. This is their sole, unique privilege.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: **Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man** (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

After taking all matters into consideration, the final summation of all God's Commands is to fear God and to keep His Commandments.

Christ loved and gave Himself as a sacrifice for mankind for the purpose of returning man's irreverent rebelliousness to reverence and obedience to God. By returning to reverence (fear) and obedience (keep) to Christ, a believer is led in the true way to an eternal union with God.

The wise preacher of Ecclesiastes exhorted ALL (Elders and their congregations) to hear: "Let us hear," he said. Preachers, as well as their congregations, must be hearers of God's Word. Every one of God's Words is powerful, precious, and pure. Therefore, it behooves us ALL to hear so that we can fear and obey the Commands of God's Word.

The humility root of all spiritual growth is fear of or reverence for God and His Word. Reverence sets us free from all doubtful disputation. When fear or reverence for God's Word reigns in the heart, there is a reverence for God the Father's Sovereign Authority as the eternal Cause of all things and for the Son as the redemptive Effect of all things. A respect for God's glorious Majesty and a dread of His Displeasure and Wrath is produced when we fear God. We worship Him and give God the honour that is due His Holy Name, both inwardly and outwardly, when we fear Him.

When Moses needed men to help him bear the burden of the people, among other spiritual qualifications, his counselor told him to select men who had the fear of God.

Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people **able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness**; and place *such* over them, *to be* rulers of thousands, *and* rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: (Exodus 18:21).

The fear of God is not an effect of some vague feeling, clouded mood, or unclear frame of mind. The fear of God is learned through having the LORD's Word and doctrine taught, and through practicing His Word that we have learned. We acquire the fear of God by mentally learning about it and, thus, gaining the spiritual knowledge of it in our spiritual education. And we acquire the fear of God by practicing it in our moral development through Jesus

Christ's all-powerful ability, which He gives to help us in our spiritual growth to maturity.

The constant hearing of God's Word and the continual doing of God's Word comprise the fear of God.

All man says and does is heard by the Father in Heaven; therefore, man needs to fear or reverence God by hearing and obeying His Word.

In the summation of all revealed things in God's Word, it is unquestionably obvious that man should fear or reverence God in his heart and by his deeds. All men were created for the purpose of fearing God and keeping His Commandments.

Thus, as Elders, let us seek to fear God and to obey Him so that we might fulfill our duty and responsibility to God and to His people. Let us labour to be a worthy Elder, before God and His people, by ruling in standing and by ruling in leading.

As a congregation, let us seek to fear God and to obey Him so that we might fulfill our duty and responsibility to God and to His Elders.

Let us honour God's Elders with spiritual honour and with natural honour and remember them with gratitude. Let us choose to obey them out of reverence to the LORD and not be slow to salute our Elders in Christ Jesus our LORD's Holy Love.



# Outline of Text

## Chapter One

### The Description Of The Office Of Elder And The Qualifications To Be An Elder

## Chapter Two

### The Elders' Duties And Responsibilities To Their Congregations

#### I. Elders Rule by Standing.

A. The LORD Jesus Christ, the Living Rod, Will Rule with His Mighty Word and Name when He Returns to Earth.

B. Moses Ruled with the Rod with the Name of the LORD God on It.

#### II. Elders Rule by Leading.

A. The LORD Rules by Leading (*Naw-hag*) His People into Blessing.

B. The LORD Rules by Leading (*Naw-hag*) His People into Punishment.

III. True Elders Are Worthy of Double Honour when They Lead God's People by Standing and Leaning on the LORD's Mighty Name.

#### A. Congregations Owe Their Worthy Elders Spiritual Honour.

1. Congregations Owe Their Worthy Elders Spiritual Esteem.
2. Congregations Need to Bestow Dignity on Their Worthy Elders.
3. Congregations Need to Consider Their Worthy Elders as Being Precious Ones.
4. Congregations Need to Consider Their Worthy Elders as Being Beloved Ones.

#### B. Congregations Owe Their Worthy Elders Natural Honour.

1. Congregations Owe Their Worthy Elders Remuneration for Their Work.
2. Congregations Must not Accuse Worthy Elders Without Two or Three Credible Witnesses.
3. Congregations Must Publicly Defend Worthy Elders Before All Who May Slander Them.

## Chapter Three

### The Congregation's Duties And Responsibilities To Their Elders

I. The Congregation Must Remember Those Who Have the Rule Over Them.

II. The Congregation Must Obey Elders Who Have the Rule Over Them.

III. The Congregation Must Salute Elders Who Have the Rule Over Them.