

I received an article entitled

“Pastor or Bishop: Does It Really Matter?”

which was apparently written as a rebuttal to my previous messages.

Scriptures are in blue and italics. The article’s words appear in red. My comments are in black. This message entitled

“Bishop or Pastor: It DOES Matter, REALLY!”

is my response.

First, I will read quotes from the protester (written in red).

Then, I will make my reply (written in black).

He wrote: Recently, there has been some discussion amongst certain brethren over the title the leader of a local church should be called.

The bishop’s reply:

I’ll take responsibility for that. I have personally been discussing, both privately and publically, by which title the leader of a local church should be called.

The shepherd wrote:

Using the reasoning of their stance in Mid-Acts dispensationalism and the King James Bible, some choose to use the title “Bishop” instead of “Pastor.”

The bishop’s reply:

Because of my stance in mid-Acts dispensationalism and the King James Bible, I now use the title “bishop” instead of “pastor” for the office in which I have desired to do a good work (1 Tim 3:1).

The shepherd wrote:

Yes, some even demand the term Bishop in lieu of Pastor. The reason given is that Pastor associates the followers in the local assembly with the identity “sheep.” The brethren then go on to state that “sheep” is a term used to identify the nation Israel while “saint” is what identifies the believer in the dispensation of grace.

The bishop’s reply:

I boldly proclaim that the word “pastor” is a term used to identify a shepherd of the sheep, known as the nation Israel. I declare that the term “sheep” restrictively applies to Israel (not us Gentiles) and that “pastor” is the “shepherd” who cares for the “flock” of “sheep” (Jer 3:15, Jer 23:1-4, Jer 50:17, Matt 10:6, Matt 15:24).

One of the names by which we are often identified is a "saint" although that "title" is not exclusive to the dispensation of grace. It was also used of believers in all ages, who are set-apart as consecrated to God, just as the word "church" was also used to label God's people in the wilderness (Acts 7:38). This is not to deny other words by which we may correctly be called, such as ambassador (and others) however, "sheep" and its accompanying "pastor" are not included in them.

The shepherd wrote:

It has even been stated that to use the term "Pastor" is incorrect.

The bishop's reply:

I said that.

The shepherd wrote:

Some go further and assert if the leader is too ashamed to use the term "Bishop" to describe his office, he should step down.

The bishop's reply:

I said that, too. I strongly believe that if a man avoids describing his office with the Pauline term "bishop" and calls himself the "pastor," then he should resign, or at least refrain from identifying himself as strictly KJV, in lieu of The Living Bible's repeated use of the word "pastor" to replace the KJV's "bishop" every time.

The shepherd wrote:

I believe this discussion has the potential for causing a great deal of confusion and certainly dissension in the Body of Christ

The bishop's reply:

I wonder, since when does discussion of a matter potentially cause a great deal of confusion? I think quite the opposite is true! Bringing a doctrine to light under scrutiny (or even debate) should prompt Bible believers to study the issue in the holy scriptures and arrive at their own position based upon a proper understanding of 'rightly dividing' the word of truth.

We should call it like it is, regardless of who it effects as we should all want to be right for Christ. Whenever we are wrong, we should admit it, fix it, and go on. The longer we hold on to bad doctrine, the worse it'll be.

The shepherd wrote:

.... as it has gone from being a private discussion amongst church leaders

The bishop's reply:

Other preachers are surely not the only qualified persons with whom preachers can talk about doctrines? Church leaders need not have secret meetings amongst themselves for fear of creating dissension in the Body of Christ.

The shepherd wrote: to a public discussion

The bishop's reply:

Ought not concerns be broadcast among family, friends, strangers, and, yea, anyone who will listen?

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" 1 Cor 16:13 If we're embarrassed of what we believe, then we should rethink and adjust it.

He wrote: and even a public attempt at correcting some leaders.

The bishop's reply:

Generally correcting church leaders in an open forum (which I did) is certainly less offensive than naming names (which I did not do) although such men are prominent figures at the fore-front of spiritual service toward God, and thus *"must be blameless" (1 Tim 3:2, Titus 1:5-7)*.

I have more respect for a person who acknowledges that God's word says what it means and means what it says, but then admits that he will not submit to it than I do for a man who excuses his refusal to yield to God's word and then changes the scripture. *"Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." 1 Tim 5:19*

The shepherd wrote:

This paper is written to help put some clarity on the matter, sort out some issues, and hopefully inject a grace perspective when needed.

The bishop's reply:

Every person has the right to express their opinion, and it behooves all of us to be kind to others and to *".... do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." Gal 6:10b*

I myself have been guilty of using the wrong title for many years, but when I was confronted with the verses, I was behooved to confess my own error (or oversight), rectify it, dispose of printed materials with the incorrect office, and move on in the right direction all the while, telling my associates (by encouragement and/or rebuke) the inaccuracy in my own life I had realized. *“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” Gal 6:1*

Quite frankly, I'm no better or worse than anyone else and if I can make the change, they can too.

Admittedly, it is very embarrassing that the 'grace pastors' have oversighted the plainly clear and simple word 'bishop' for what we should be called.

But we need to do the very thing --- that we constantly tell others they need to do --- and that is, to accept the word our KJV Bible uses and to adopt our speaking to be 'Paulitically correct.'

We do it when it comes to the 'KJV only' word 'dispensation.' We can - - and should -- certainly do it on the 'KJV' term for the office of the 'bishop.'

Just because people are in the habit of using the word "pastor" doesn't make it right.

We know what people are 'trying to say' when they tell us they are a 'born-again Christian' but they are incorrect --- and it gives us an opportunity to teach them the truth.

We have many doctrines to show the distinctiveness of Paul's ministry, such as the issues of water baptism, the gospel of the grace of God, etc.

Using the term 'bishop' (rather than 'pastor') provides us with yet another distinguishing mark ---

that would differ us from lots of typical religious denominations (that grace folks ought NOT to want to be like) ---

although this particular word 'bishop' IS used by some 'non-mainline' denominations with which grace folks don't want to be similar.

So, why would we discriminate
as if one false religion is 'not as bad' as another false religion?

The point is, they're all wrong --- in some areas --- though some of them have some truth in some areas.

We should call 'right' what is 'right'
and point out 'wrong' where it is 'wrong' --- WHERE-EVER it may be!

Now, for the study.

The shepherd wrote:

What Do The Terms Mean?

First, let's get our terminology straight. We need a common set of definitions before having a common ground for discussion. There are three terms that we will look at to get this common starting point: Bishop, Elder, Pastor.

The bishop's reply:

I have no problem with that. In fact, it is a good idea. But we must let the KJV scriptures give us the terms.

The shepherd wrote:

Bishop (used in 1 Tim 3:1)

The Greek word translated 'bishop' is episkope. You might be familiar with the word Episcopal or Episcopalian which are derived from this word.

The episcopal's reply:

That's okay with me. But let's not let those familiar words bias us.

The shepherd wrote:

Strong's Concordance Definition by inspection; by implication *superintendence*; specifically the Christian "episcopate" - the office of a "bishop", bishoprick, visitation.

Thayer's Greek Lexicon Definition

Thayer's 2nd definition is the one we see most often and it is associated with the description of the leader being an "overseer."

Other Places in Paul's Epistles Where Used (Phil 1:1, 1 Tim 3:2, Tit 1:7)

The bishop's reply: I agree.

The shepherd wrote:

Elder (Acts 20:17)

The Greek word translated "elders" is presbuteros. You might be familiar with the term Presbyter or Presbyterian which are derived from this word.

The bishop's reply:

Okay again. And let's don't get scared away from this word either because of its association or current usage.

Strong's Concordance Definition

elderly; older; a senior,
specifically an Israelite *Sanhedrist* (also figuratively, member of the celestial council)
or Christian "presbyter" - elder, old

Thayer's Greek Lexicon Definition

The bishop's reply:

Thayer's was basically the same as Strong's except for one quote from Thayer's Greek Lexicon's after the 2b definition: It said:

"The New Testament uses the term bishop, elders, and presbyters interchangeably."

The bishop's reply:

I disagree with that statement, and will answer it in a few minutes.

The shepherd wrote:

Other Places in Paul's Epistles Where Used (1 Tim 5:1,17,19; Tit 1:5)

He also wrote:

There is a great deal of confusion in local churches regarding the term "elder." Today, most people think of the office of elder as being a corporate officer sort of like a member of the board of directors. But there is no such provision in the Bible for an administrative or corporate eldership. We'll investigate the real meaning and use of this a little later.

Pastors (Eph 4:11)

The Greek word translated "pastors" is poimen.

Strong's Concordance Definition

a shepherd, pastor

Thayer's Greek Lexicon Definition

#1) a herdsman, especially a shepherd

The bishop's reply: I completely agree with that #1 definition.

The shepherd wrote:

Thayer's Greek Lexicon Definition

#2) metaphorically

2a) the presiding officer, manager, director, of any assembly: so of Christ the Head of the church

2a1) of the overseers of the Christian assemblies

2a2) of kings and princes

My reply: I think the metaphorical definition #2 is WRONG by relating the word "pastor" -- so of Christ the Head of the church. **The scripture makes NO such connection like that, and to assume it, is NOT correct.** I believe that the metaphorical definition belongs in Israel's program.

The shepherd wrote: **Elder and Bishop - Clarifying Terminology**

It is clear from Titus 1:5-7 that the elder is meant to be an equivalent term to the bishop.

My reply: NO, it is NOT! I will explain 'why not' in a few moments.

The shepherd wrote:

Paul begins the discussion regarding the ordination of elders and their qualifications (vs. 6). In verse 7, the word bishop is used interchangeably with the word elder.

The bishop's reply: NO, it is NOT!

The shepherd wrote:

Without digressing into a totally new discussion of responsibility, this alone should bring about a sobering realization to anyone who is considering the office of elder.

The bishop's reply: Elder and bishop are NOT interchangeable, as we will see in scripture, even though some think they are.

We're going to let the **scripture verses** -- rather than a commentary or a dictionary -- **show us the difference between a bishop and an elder.**

I understand that both 'elders' and 'presbyters' are older.

But there is a clear distinction and a simple one in the KJV verses between the elders and a bishop.

Please listen closely and examine these passages carefully:

A 'bishop' is by implication an 'elder.'

But EVERY elder may not 'desire the office of a 'bishop.'

*Titus 1:5-9 "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and **ordain elders** (plural) in every city, as I had appointed thee:*

6 If any be blameless (any 'ordained elders' - naturally - from vs. 5), the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.

*7 For **a bishop** ('a' -- which is 'singular' and by implication, 'one' of the 'ordained elders' - from vs. 5) must be blameless (he, also), as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;*

8 But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;

*9 Holding fast the faithful **word** as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound **doctrine** both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. "*

As we compare the next 2 passages (1 Tim 5:17 and 1 Tim 3:1), notice the same idea that

'A' (that is, one) 'bishop' will be 'one' of the 'elders' that wants to commit his time to the 'good work' of the study and ministry of God's word.

There are plainly distinct 'types' (or 'classifications') of 'elders':

- all of the elders obviously rule
- some of the elders rule 'well'
- certain of the 'well-ruling elders' (logically, the 'bishops' as we read in Titus 1:9) also choose to 'labor' (that is, 'work') in the word and doctrine.

*1 Tim 5:17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, **especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.** (Those are the 'elders' that are the 'bishops.')*

Here is another example of a group (believers) within a group (all men):

Gal 6:10 "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto **all men**, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

Just like, *2 Tim 4:13b* "bring with thee, and the books, but **especially** the parchments." Both books and parchments could be classified as 'writings' - but the parchments were written on different material.

My point is this:

Among the 'ordained elders' is a 'category' of elders who rule well then, within the 'ordained elders that rule well' is another 'category' of elders who 'desire the office of a bishop.' Therefore, the terms CANNOT be equivalent nor interchangeable.

1 Tim 3:1-5 This is a true saying, **If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.**

2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

A 'bishop' must be a 'well-ruling elder' both at home and in the church who 'desires' the 'responsible position' of 'working' (that is 'laboring' in the word and doctrine).

The shepherd wrote: **Which Term Is Correct Today?**

Paul uses the term elder 4 times, elders 2 times, bishop 3 times, bishops 4 times, and pastors 1 time in his epistles.

The bishop's reply: Right.

The shepherd wrote: It is argued that because the term pastor is used in Eph 4:11 in a listing of offices that were transitional in nature such as apostle and prophet, and the term pastor is no longer to be used by local church leaders in the dispensation of grace.

My reply: I said something like that. But we'll discuss Eph 4:11 in a bit.

The shepherd wrote:

It has been stated that these are "gifts" that have since passed from the scene of the local church once the Word of God and the Fall of Israel were completed post-Acts 28.

The bishop's reply:

I believe I said that.

The shepherd wrote:

Furthermore, it is argued that the term pastor is a reference in particular to leadership that is specific to the nation of Israel. Israel is identified in the Scriptures as sheep and the Body of Christ is not. Thus, pastor is not applicable because the Body of Christ are never identified as sheep in the dispensation of grace.

The bishop's reply:

He evidently heard me say that too.

The shepherd wrote:

Can You Have It Both Ways?

While it is important to understand the clear division between Israel and the Body of Christ and the programs for each, it is equally important to understand the similarities.

The bishop's reply:

I have no problem with that.

The shepherd wrote:

Furthermore, we must be consistent in our understanding of these programs.

The bishop's reply:

I agree with that.

The shepherd wrote:

If we are to accept the argument that the term bishop is specific to the Body of Christ while pastor is specific to Israel, and the term pastor is not used to describe the Body of Christ, then we should also not expect the term bishop to be applied to Israel. Otherwise, the argument doesn't make sense. In mathematical terms, if: $A=B$ and $C=D$, and A is not $=$ to C , then B cannot $=$ D . If $Pastor=Israel$ $Bishop=Body$ of Christ and $Pastor$ does not $=$ $Bishop$, Then $Bishop$ cannot $=$ $Israel$.

The bishop's reply:

I did not say that, nor do I think it. At this point, if he was listening to me, he obviously misunderstood my position.

The shepherd wrote: **The Bishop of Israel?**
Our mathematical formula doesn't work in this case.

The bishop's reply:

Of course his mathematical formula is correct, but to force application of that mathematical formula in this case is not correct. I didn't do it, and he just admitted that it doesn't work here.

The shepherd wrote:
As a matter of fact, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is called a Bishop, Pastor and Shepherd - all in relation to Israel!

The bishop's reply: I recognize that.

The shepherd wrote: (1 Pet 2:25) "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

He wrote:

1 Peter was written to the nation of Israel - it is a Jewish Epistle.

The bishop's reply: I agree.

The shepherd wrote:
Christ is a Bishop to the nation Israel! Israel has a Bishop.

The bishop's reply:

As 1 Peter is set in Ages to Come, Christ 'will be' a Bishop to Israel Israel 'will have' a Bishop. But He 'is' not there yet.

1 Peter 5:4 "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

The shepherd wrote:
If we are looking for a clean separation of terminology, this violates our system.

The bishop's reply:

I agree, but I never claimed to be looking for that mathematical formula.

Here is a point that I think he evidently doesn't 'get':

Although I believe that the word 'pastor' (which means 'shepherd') applies to Israel (who are God's sheep, and not us)

I did not 'limit' the word 'bishop' to only be used by the Body of Christ.

The shepherd wrote:

If Christ is a Bishop to Israel, where is the dispensational separation that we are looking for and expecting?

The bishop's reply:

Nevertheless, if we used his reasoning with the word "church" the same error would occur. Observe:

For example,

Acts 7:38 speaks of the "church" in the wilderness. (But none of us think we are in that church where Moses was the pastor, do we?)

Matt 16:18 reads *"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* (But none of us think we are in the church of Peter's confession, do we?)

In **Acts 2:44-47**, the "church" had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. (Again, none of us do that today, do we?)

Using his logic, could we say "where is the dispensational separation that we are looking for and expecting" --- concerning the word "church"? Of course not!

Although we recognize that the "church" has been and will always be the "true believers in God" we also understand that the word "church" describes different people in different programs.

My point is this: When a word appears in different programs, we should study to learn its applications, rather than make a blanket statement about it.

The shepherd wrote:

Bishops and Elders Before Paul?

If the term Bishop is specific to local church leadership in the dispensation of grace

The bishop's reply:

I believe it is.

The shepherd wrote:

.... we would expect the term not to be used to describe believers prior to this dispensation.

The bishop's reply:

This is not my reasoning. I just proved it with the word "church."

Obviously, the use of the word "bishop" is not confined to the dispensation of grace. I never implied that it was.

The shepherd wrote:

There were bishops prior to Paul!

My reply:

Technically, we know, by verses, that there was 'one.' I never said there weren't any. In fact, in my messages, I even cited the same verses on this point that he did. They are about Judas Iscariot, namely:

Acts 1:20 "For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his **bishoprick** let another take."

"Bishoprick" is the office of a bishop, and the next verse bears that out:

Psa 109:8 "Let his days be few; and let another take his **office**."

The shepherd wrote:

There were "bishops" who were overseers in the program for the nation Israel as well as those appointed in the Body of Christ.

My reply:

Without question, Judas was a bishop. I don't have a problem that Israel's program could have bishops, overseers as in Acts 20:28, just as they were called the 'church' and they were 'saints.'

I would like to ask a couple of questions on this point, for thought:

Was Judas called a bishop because he was an apostle? (Matt 10:5) If so, there would have been 11 more.

--- OR ---

Could Judas have been called a bishop (overseer) because he watched over the money (John 13:29)?

The scriptures do not say "why" so neither should we! When the scriptures are silent, we should be also. That's the safe way.

The shepherd wrote:

It is an interesting side note that the term "elder" was also used to describe those who had authority in relation to the saved Israelites.

1 Peter 5:1 "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:"

The bishop's reply:

I agree. Israel had elders (older men) who had authority.

The shepherd wrote:

In other words, the program to the redeemed in Israel not only had people who occupied the office of bishop, they also had people who were designated as elders.

The bishop's reply:

Again, we have scriptures that Judas Iscariot occupied the office of bishop and we know that were men (plural) who were elders in Israel's program.

The shepherd wrote:

Do you remember that in Titus 1 we also saw that the office of bishop and elder were equivalent titles?

The bishop's reply:

I believe I showed by comparing Titus 1:5-9, 1 Tim 5:17, and 1 Tim 3:1-5 that bishop and elder are not equivalent titles.

A bishop would be an elder

but not all elders desire the office/work of a bishop.

The shepherd wrote:

The bottom line is that we must be consistent in our understanding of Scriptures.

The bishop's reply: I agree.

The shepherd wrote:

If the office of bishop and elder is specific to the Body of Christ

The bishop's reply: I do not think that.

The shepherd wrote:

.... and pastor is not, then how can we be consistent in our understanding given that all three of these terms are used in both the previous and present dispensation? Is it possible that some are trying to create a division in Scripture where there really isn't one? Is it possible that these three terms are used to describe the *same* office, just *different* functions?

The bishop's reply:

The Living Bible uses the word 'pastor' as the **consistent replacement** for the words 'bishop' and 'elder.' But in the KJV scriptures, not so!

The shepherd wrote:

Are The Sheep Really All Gone?

The basis for the argument that local church leaders today should be called "bishop" instead of "pastor" stems from the supposed distinction between Israel being called "sheep" and the Body of Christ believers being called "saints."

The bishop's reply:

The **basis** for the argument that local church leaders today should be called "bishop" instead of "pastor" is 'directly' because of the 'direct KJV' verses.

Too many people, "pastors" included, have **followed The Living Bible** on this issue, whether they realized it or not, but they need to change:

KJV = 1 Tim 3:1 "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work."

The Living Bible says "It is a true saying that if a man wants to be a pastor he has a good ambition."

*KJV = 1 Tim 3:2 "A **bishop** then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;"*

*The Living Bible says "For a **pastor** must be a good man whose life cannot be spoken against."*

*KJV = Titus 1:5 "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and **ordain elders** in every city, as I had appointed thee: "*

*The Living Bible says "... and I asked you to **appoint pastors** in every city."*

Since The Living Bible substitutes the word 'pastor' for 'bishop and elder' every time, maybe that is why the writer of the article thinks "bishops, elders, and pastors" are all three interchangeable words.

*KJV = Titus 1:7 "For a **bishop** must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; "*

*The Living Bible says "These **pastors** must be men of blameless lives because they are God's ministers."*

*KJV = Phil 1:1 "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the **bishops** and deacons:*

*The Living Bible reads "... To the **pastors** and deacons and all the Christians in the city of Philippi."*

Now, we'll get back to the issue of "sheep."

The shepherd wrote:

.... the term "bishop" is an inter-dispensational title. The term "sheep" will be seen as such also.

My reply:

Ok about the bishop, but I do not think the scripture ever calls the Body of Christ "sheep." I believe that word is exclusively Israel.

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

The shepherd wrote: **When Did The Flock Become A Body?**

The bishop's reply: I don't believe it did.

The shepherd wrote:

First, who is Paul talking to in the passage? He is talking to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17).

The bishop's reply: I agree.

The shepherd wrote: Second, who is identified as “the flock?” Paul tells us later in the verse when he names “the church of God.”

The bishop's reply:

Yes, Paul did name the “church of God” as the “flock.” However, we have already seen that the word “church,” as the true believers, does not necessarily mean the Body of Christ.

Here is an example:

In **Acts 19:1-7**, Paul found 12 disciples at Ephesus, who were in the ‘little flock,’ (Israel's program) as they had been water baptized with John's baptism, but did not yet have the Holy Ghost.

Acts 19:6 *And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.*

Surely no right-divider would think we need to follow the example of the church at Ephesus to be water baptized, speak with tongues, and prophecy. During the transitional period, and in the book of Acts, distinct lines of separation, between who is in Israel's program and who is in ours, are impossible to be drawn. Therefore, we should stay with what IS clear.

Paul raised the dead in Acts 28:1-6; Paul healed in Acts 28:6-9.

The shepherd wrote:

Yes, the flock is the “church” as in The Church “which is His Body.”
Who do we associate with a “flock?” Sheep!

The bishop's reply: I do not believe the ‘Flock Church’ is the ‘Body Church.’

The shepherd wrote:

We need to ask two simple questions: While we understand that the book of Acts is transitional in nature, and the sign gifts were temporary, is the designation "flock" also temporary?

The bishop's reply: Yes, it was.

The shepherd wrote:

If this is the case, at what point did the Body of Christ, or even the Ephesians in particular, stop being the "flock?"

The bishop's reply: The Body of Christ never was the "flock." Some of the Ephesian saints were apparently in the "flock," as we saw in Acts 19:1-7.

Without question, Paul had a mixed audience of both Jews and Gentiles at Ephesus some of which were in the "little flock" - saved before Paul's revelation and others in the Body of Christ - saved by Paul's gospel. We aren't able to separate "who was in which program."

Apollos was in Israel's program at Ephesus, but learned "grace":

Acts 18:24-28 *And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, **came to Ephesus.***

*25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, **knowing only the baptism of John.***

*26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. **(Evidently, they taught him the grace message.)***

*27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much **which had believed through grace:***

28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

Acts 19:8 *And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.*

Acts 19:10 *And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.*

Acts 19:17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

Acts 20:21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

In his article, he mentioned that the Ephesian elders were called 'overseers' in Acts 20:28, which is the same Greek word 'espiskopos' which is translated 'bishops' in Phil 1:1.

The shepherd wrote:

I would ask anyone who holds the position that the term "flock" is transitional the following question: Was the Body of Christ formed in Acts or after Acts?

The bishop's reply: Well, I do NOT think the "flock" was transitional it did not **convert** into the Body, but I'll answer the question anyway. I believe the Body of Christ 'began' with the salvation of Paul in Acts 9.

1 Tim 1:16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that **in me first** Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, **for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.**

The shepherd wrote: Unless one holds to a theological position that states the Body of Christ began after Acts 28, this transitional terminology argument does not make sense.

The bishop's reply:

He obviously misunderstood my position (what he calls 'argument') about what was transitional. I'll explain it as we go along.

The shepherd wrote: **Where Did The Pastors Go?**

The bishop's reply:

They went to the grave the same place the apostles and prophets went and actually, ALL the 'specially-gifted' men:

Eph 4:11,12 And he gave some, **apostles**; and some, **prophets**; and some, **evangelists**; and some, **pastors** and **teachers**;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

The shepherd wrote:

It is obvious from these two verses that pastors were given to edify the Body of Christ.

The bishop's reply:

Yes, and so were apostles and prophets, which he disregards for today. But he failed to include the following verse 13, which tells the **length of time the special-given gifts were to operate:**

Eph 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

The shepherd wrote:

While we know that apostles transitioned off the scene with the death of the appointed apostles - no one was left to fill the job requirements.

The bishop's reply:

There are some people that claim to be apostles today. What do you tell them?

The shepherd wrote:

Prophets passed off the scene with the completion of the Word of God and the Fall of Israel.

The bishop's reply: Some people maintain that there are prophets today also. Do you tell them that they don't exist anymore?

My point is this: People still profess to be apostles and prophets and even pastors but that doesn't mean that there are any.

The shepherd wrote:

What about evangelists, pastors and teachers? Are we still exhorted to do the things that these people were given to do?

The bishop's reply:

Surely we 'rightly-dividing dispensationalists' understand that ALL the 'gifts' that Christ gave (at the time) 'WHEN' He ascended up on high (Eph 4:8) have ALL passed away, with the dying out of those men that had them. So the question is about their work. Does the work of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers still go on today? We must let the KJV BIBLE answer that for us.

The shepherd wrote: Are we exhorted to evangelize?

Then he quoted:

2 Tim 4:5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

The bishop's reply:

Timothy lived during the time that the special gifts were active. He even received a special ministry-gift himself by prophecy by laying of hands. **Maybe Timothy was given the "gift of evangelism":**

1 Tim 4:14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

2 Tim 1:6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

So could we "apply" Paul's encouragement to Timothy to our own lives, considering Timothy's gift? I'll let you answer that.

Philip was an evangelist (Acts 21:8) one of the 7.

The shepherd wrote: Are we exhorted to teach?

Then he quoted:

1 Tim 4:11 These things command and teach.

The bishop's reply:

Ironically, teaching is one of the things that a BISHOP is told to do:

1 Tim 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

As it is the duty of the BISHOP to "hold fast the faithful word" (Titus 1:9), would not a 'bishop' be the man to teach it to other faithful men?

2 Tim 2:2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

Could this not be the men who desire to teach in the office of a bishop?

The shepherd wrote:

Then why would we not be exhorted to care for the local church as a pastor? Then he quoted:

1 Tim 3:5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

The bishop's reply:

Isn't that interesting? The **VERY VERSE** (1 Tim 3:5) that he quoted to say that we are exhorted to care for the local church as a **PASTOR is actually said** of a **BISHOP** (from 1 Tim 3:2)!

This is gross **SUBSTITUTION** of the KJV word 'bishop' with The Living Bible word 'pastor' for shepherds to keep their beloved, but erroneous title.

This shepherd is pulling the 'function' out of the KJV, but getting the 'office' out of The Living Bible.

The shepherd wrote:

Just because the word "pastor" is not used verbatim to actively describe the function of caring, does this diminish or change the need or activity of the local church leader?

The bishop's reply:

The function of caring is not what changed --- the TITLE is what changed! The man who desires that "office" is to be called a BISHOP, not a PASTOR according to the KJV Bible!

The shepherd wrote: Does the local church need feeding, protecting, and guiding? This sounds like the job of a shepherd, doesn't it?

The bishop's reply:

If the shepherd is watching over a flock of sheep, it does.

The shepherd wrote:

Is there a verse that tells us that "pastor" is a transitional term such as apostle or prophet?

The bishop's reply:

Is there a verse that tells us that "apostle" or "prophet" are transitional terms? (Although I do not believe they are for today.)

My point is this: The Bible says that God put • apostles • prophets • teachers • miracle-workers • healers and • speakers in tongues in the church, the Body of Christ. They are packaged together. You can't get rid of "some" of them based on what "you" do or don't do -- because there are other people who still want "all" of them, and claim to do all those works. By the way they have verses:

1 Cor 12:27-30 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

*28 And God hath set some in the church, first **apostles**, secondarily **prophets**, thirdly **teachers**, after that **miracles**, then gifts of **healings**, **helps**, **governments**, diversities of **tongues**.*

29 Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?

30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?

The shepherd wrote:

Isn't "pastor" grouped with those two terms (he's referring to "evangelists" and "teachers") in Eph 4. It is in a grouping with those activities that describe what a leader of a local church should be doing now.

The bishop's reply:

"Pastor" **IS grouped** in Eph 4 but not just with **two of those terms** "evangelists and "teachers." **"Pastor" is grouped with "ALL" those terms** apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Christ gave them all when He ascended before the canon of scripture was completed.

The shepherd wrote:

Again, one would have to take the theological position that the Body of Christ began after Acts 28 in order to do away with all of these terms and functions in the book of Ephesians.

The bishop's reply:

Again, I believe that ALL the "specially given" gifts of Eph 4:8-13 have ceased with the decease of those men that had them.

I believe that Eph 4:13 indicates that they were given "TILL" the scriptures were fulfilled (that which perfects a man - 2 Tim 3:16,17). They were in operation during the time of **"PARTIAL REVELATION"** (1 Cor 13:8-13).

The shepherd wrote:

However, you could not eliminate them in the Pastoral Epistles.

The bishop's reply:

GOD did not label any books of the Bible, the "Pastoral Epistles." WHERE did that title come from?

WHY NOT call them the "Episcopal Epistles" since "bishop" is the name of the office that appears in them?

The shepherd wrote:

The Bottom Line

All of this leads to the following conclusions: The term "sheep" is descriptive of the Body of Christ through understanding that "flock" is an acceptable term.

The bishop's reply: I disagree. I do not accept the Body of Christ is/was/nor will be a flock of sheep. That is who Israel was.

The shepherd wrote:

The term "pastor" is descriptive of the function of the local church leader today, the leaders in the previous and subsequent dispensations, and of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

My reply: I disagree. The term "pastor" means "shepherd" and does not apply to local church leaders today. Instead the word "bishop" does.

The shepherd wrote:

It is divisive and incorrect to demand that term "pastor" is improper to describe (a) local church leader today.

The bishop's reply: That's his opinion. I have mine (and my King James Bible). We each have the American right to express them. Correcting a wide-spread and long-standing error is never easy.

The shepherd wrote:

The term "bishop" describes the office while the term "pastor" describes the function - that of shepherd.

The bishop's reply:

We don't need to stray from the verses nor from the KJV in order to use the term "pastor" to describe the **function** of a "bishop." We don't need to **TYPIFY** us as sheep and our leader as a pastor, when we have clear verses otherwise.

The actual verses in our KJV Bible describe that function very well and in detail. We've already read them.

As an example, years ago people used to keep things cold in, what was called, an **ice box**. Now, we store perishable food in a **refrigerator**, which even contains a separate, colder compartment called a **freezer**.

We should also recognize "progressive revelation" when we see it in our Bible as well.

The shepherd wrote:

Both (implying "pastor" and "bishop) are equally acceptable terms and under grace, don't we have a choice of doing what is acceptable to God?

The bishop's reply:

I do not believe both are equally acceptable terms for the Body of Christ after the completion of the scriptures.

I believe "pastor" fits in Israel's program --- which "faded away gradually" as the Body of Christ was being formed and as the scriptures were being completed and compiled.

Would it be 'acceptable' under grace to be water baptized?

1 Cor 1:16 And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.

Now, we've got a verse to practice water baptism, if I didn't know better.

Would it be 'acceptable' under grace to prophesy and speak in tongues? It would be, if I treated it like a pastor does the word "bishop."

1 Cor 14:39 Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

These things, such as water baptism, prophesying, speaking in tongues, as well as physical healings, signs and miracles, etc. belonged to Israel -- yet occurred among the Gentiles -- during the early stages of the new dispensation of grace beginning when God was giving gifts to men while both programs were overlapping in time before the Bible was finished.

Rom 12:4-8 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

*5 So we, being many, are **one body in Christ**, and every one members one of another.*

*6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether **prophecy**, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;*

*7 Or **ministry**, let us wait on our ministering: or he that **teacheth**, on teaching;*

*8 Or he that **exhorteth**, on exhortation: he that **giveth**, let him do it with simplicity; he that **ruleth**, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.*

I do not believe that GOD is giving ANY of those gifts in Eph 4:8 **today**.

The shepherd wrote:

What's In A Name?

By what title does Paul describe himself or others in Scripture? He speaks of the office of bishop but do we find one instance where he actually uses the title in reference to a local church leader?

The bishop's reply:

He certainly uses the word "bishop" as the noun that a local church leader is. Words do identify things. Names do identify nouns.

The shepherd wrote: Do we have one verse that speaks of Bishop Timothy or Bishop Titus? The answer obviously is no.

The bishop's reply:

"Do we have one verse that speaks of Pastor Timothy or Pastor Titus?" No, we do not.

The shepherd wrote:

There is not one verse in Scripture that gives us the title by which a local church leader was called in Paul's epistles.

The bishop's reply:

There are verses in Paul's epistles that DO teach us the name, title, office, description, designation, position, or term to call our local church leader. Ironically, he says there aren't any verses, then he lists some:

He wrote: However, we do find some titles used for church leaders.

Then he listed

Rom 1:1, where Paul was called a servant of Jesus Christ

Phil. 1:1, where Paul and Timothy were called the servants of Jesus Christ -

Titus 1:1, where Paul is called a servant of God

Phile 1:1, where Paul is called a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

The bishop's reply:

Evidently, the writer of the article thinks that the only "title" used in Phil 1:1 is "servants" although the verse goes on to say that it is written to the "saints," with the "**bishops**" and "**deacons**."

Maybe church bulletins should be changed from saying Pastor So-and-so to be Servant So-and-so or Prisoner So-and-so.

Instead of being POW's, we could be POJC's.

The shepherd wrote:

Do you see a pattern here? *The issue has never been the title but rather the man.*

The bishop's reply: So now, are we going to focus on the man who is filling the leadership role?

The shepherd wrote:

It is the *servant* aspect of leadership that Paul emphasizes when we see references in the official introductory paragraphs of his epistles.

The bishop's reply:

Wouldn't the "title" of the "servants" be called the **deacons** (which is 1 of the 2 offices Paul wrote about)?

The shepherd wrote:

As a local church leader, we should be bishop, pastor, and elder at any given time as the need arises.

The bishop's reply:

I know lots of men who call themselves pastors, and I know some elders ... but **where are the BISHOPS** of grace churches?

The shepherd wrote:

The real calling for a local church leader is not tied up in the terminology that provides a title, but rather to exercise in his heart what God really intends - grace!

The bishop's reply:

If you don't know "who you are" how could you know "what to do?"

First of all, I don't believe local church leaders are "called." I believe that some elders desire the office of a bishop (1 Tim 3:1).

Secondly, I believe that it **does really matter** what "title" we call our local church leaders. They are at the **fore-front** and their names **and titles** appear on printed literature and in audio broadcasts nearly everywhere their churches are advertised.

For example, I don't think that we should refer to ourselves as "the circumcision" even though most American men in the church are circumcised because circumcision was a "TITLE" given to Israel, and a "token" of God's covenant with Abraham, as a mark in their FLESH to identify them as His chosen people.

The shepherd used:

1 Cor 10:23,24 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

24 Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.

Then he wrote:

Although this passage is not directly describing the issue we've been discussing, we can still find the application. As we seek the edification of other believers, we should decide what is for the enrichment of those believers.

The bishop's reply:

"Enrichment" is not the only consideration. We should also decide what is for "correction."

The shepherd wrote: **In some cultures, calling oneself a bishop would associate you with a religion that you actively preach against!**

The bishop's reply:

That statement revealed his feelings for his objections.

But we should not base our choice of "words" upon how religions use or mis-use them.

He wrote: **Our culture recognizes the title of both pastor and bishop.**

The bishop's reply:

Then it shouldn't be such a big problem for us rightly-dividing grace believers to use the **KJV, Pauline term of 'bishop'** for a local church leader.

The shepherd wrote:

Under grace, we are as free to choose the title for our church leaders as we are free to choose the name of our local assembly. Leaders may be "bishop", "pastor" or "elder."

My reply: Oddly, why don't any grace assemblies call their leader "bishop?" It's true, under grace, you can call yourself, your church leaders, or your local assembly anything you want to call them and you do!

However, that doesn't make it right. Many, in fact, most protestant denominations call their leaders "pastor" because they think he (**or SHE**) is the "under-Shepherd" over their flock of sheep.

The shepherd wrote:

Even if you don't agree with the conclusion set forth in this article, it is my hope that you see that dogmatic demands cause more harm than good.

The bishop's reply:

I'll admit that I am dogmatic, in a sense.

After all, as a Gentile, I used to even be classified as a "dog."

Furthermore, my dictionary that tells me that the root word "dogma" means "a settled opinion; a principal; a doctrinal notion, particularly in matters of faith and philosophy."

Being dogmatical is to "assert positively; to teach with bold confidence."

However, I must be fully honest here: Another definition is "to advance with arrogance" which may have been the writer's intention.

"Arrogance" is "the act of pride whereby a person exhorts himself to an undue degree of importance by vanity or false pretense of right or merit."

1 Cor 8:1 Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.

I spent many years of my life in confusion about the Bible. But I am thankful now to understand, what I do understand, in the scriptures. It is never my intention to appear arrogant. If I ever did, or do, for that, I apologize.

A favorite preacher of mine once told me that after hearing his sermon, a man came from his audience and said to him, "You preach like that's the only way it could be." My friend replied, "Maybe you never heard anyone preach **with conviction** before."

Well, that's where I am at with the issue at hand.

He wrote: **Legalism places demands on us that we never find in Scripture.**

My reply: It's not being 'legalistic' to sound a wake-up trumpet in an attempt to rally the grace soldiers to identify their "officers" by the right title as the KJV and Pauline truth does, since that's the foundation for our rewards (1 Cor 3:10-15, Col 1:21-23).

2 Tim 2:5 And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.

The shepherd wrote:

It should be clear by now that there isn't enough Scriptural support for the strict demands of some that others change their title from pastor to bishop.

The bishop's reply:

I believe there is more than enough Scriptural support to change. Remember, we only have one verse that tells us to rightly divide. Is that enough? The title of the office is a "bishop" is plainly stated. Not so with "pastor." There is certainly more evidence to use bishop than pastor!

For me, I had to admit that I had been wrong, swallow the embarrassment, clear my throat, and start telling people yet another "distinction" of being "Paulitically correct" (with the KJV). Changing will only be as hard as you make it. It's easier to get the egg off your face quickly, than to smear it around and make a bigger mess!

The shepherd wrote:

One other word regarding those who would use the position of being a King James Version Bible to support strict dogmatism: Based on the discussion and points provided, hopefully it can be seen that the KJV position has nothing to do with what local church leaders should be called.

The bishop's reply:

Yeah, right, why bother to look in our KJV Bible for what local church leaders should be called? Who would expect to find it there according to shepherds who use The Living Bible term "pastor"?

The shepherd wrote:

This is a "straw-man" argument and should be seen for the smokescreen that it is. My prayer is we begin to focus more on our identity in Christ than our identity before man.

The bishop's reply:

Why worry about what others think? After all, that is the responsibility of a **bishop** (1 Tim 3:2) (which he doesn't want to be identified as):

1 Tim 3:7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

The shepherd wrote:

Until then, we will restrict the grace that God so richly and freely bestows on us.

The bishop's reply:

Since we are saying two different things one of us is wrong, or we're both wrong. But we can't both be right. So, decide for yourself.

Gal 6:4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

This is David Dowell, saying, "Don't pull the wool over your eyes on this one! Think about it." Copyright © 2007 Mag.Word

Jer 2:8 The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the **pastors** also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.

Jer 3:15 And I will give you **pastors** according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

Jer 10:21 For the **pastors** are become brutish, and have not sought the LORD: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered.

Jer 12:10 Many **pastors** have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness.

Jer 17:16 As for me, I have not hastened from being a **pastor** to follow thee: neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was right before thee.

Jer 22:22 The wind shall eat up all thy **pastors**, and thy lovers shall go into captivity: surely then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness.

Jer 23:1 Woe be unto the **pastors** that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD.

Jer 23:2 Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the **pastors** that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD.

Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, **pastors** and teachers;