

1 *God's Plan for the Church*



*Chris White & Gonzalo Hernandez at the First
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In 1 Chronicles 12:32, the Bible describes a fascinating group of people among the followers of King David. They were men “of the sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do...” Do we whom Jesus has called to be evangelists understand the times we are living in? Have we understood what God is doing in our generation, so that we may be wise co-laborers with Him? Have we seen our calling from God’s *larger* perspective? If so, then it is an exciting time to be alive!

As evangelists, we need first to catch the vision of what the Lord has been doing in history, so that we can recognize His work in our own day. Over the last several hundred years, the Lord has been restoring Biblical truths that had long been lost through compromise, false teaching and false teachers, and the exaltation of human religious traditions in place of eternal, Biblical truths. These eternal truths include salvation by faith and not by works, the assurance of the forgiveness of sins, sanctification, holiness, the baptism of believers by immersion, and the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit, among others.

In recent years, the Lord has been restoring to His church all the ministries, gifts, and functions of the Biblical Body of Christ. This includes the critical role in the early church of *elders/shepherds* in the leadership of local congregations, something believers are only just beginning to comprehend once again. Carefully read the words of 1 Peter 5:1-4, and note what is said, *as well as what is not said*:

The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but

being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

Peter is stating that the elders are called to “shepherd” [*poimaino* (poy-mah’ee-no); to tend as a shepherd, to pastor]² the flock of God. Notice that “shepherd” here is an *action*, not a *title*, and that the word elders is always plural.

During the first century A.D., a multiplicity of ministry was the normal experience of the congregations of the saints. The traditional role of a single pastor serving as spiritual leader and chief executive officer of a local church was a historical development in later centuries *as churches became institutionalized*. Remember that the Biblical Body of Christ will never be an institution or an organization, nor is it the property of any institution or organization. The Biblical church is a living organism made up of many members with a wide variety of functions, and it belongs only to Jesus Christ.

To summarize, we are living in a day when Christ is restoring the church to her full New Testament pattern and power. The Father is preparing an eternal Bride for His Son, one that will be ready for Him when He returns to earth! Remember the famous passage from James 5:7-8: