THE QUESTION

Were elders and bishops the same office in the early church?

Asked by a THF member on October 2, 2026 · published November 9, 2026, updated November 11, 2026 · 16 numbered quotations · the 49 early Christian passages and 261 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/were-elders-and-bishops-the-same-office-in-the-early-church

The short answer *Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words*

In these passages, elders and overseers (bishops) look like the same leaders at first, and Clement, Hermas and Polycarp speak of presbyters leading together. Ignatius then shows one bishop with a council of presbyters. Even later, bishops were chosen with the people's consent and had presbyters as advisers.

LIBRARY ONLY	This study was written only from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed at the back, with a link to read it.
HOW IT WAS MADE	Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.
SHARING WITH AN AI?	Every quotation here comes from The Historic Faith's library. If you paste this study into an AI, anything it adds beyond these pages comes from that AI, not from us.

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POINT 1 OF 8

Acts 20 uses both titles for one group

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

Irenaeus retells Paul's meeting at Miletus. Irenaeus says bishops and presbyters came from Ephesus and nearby cities, and Paul tells those same men that the Holy Spirit made them bishops, or overseers. In Acts 20:17 they are called elders, and in Acts 20:28 overseers. Irenaeus himself speaks of the faith kept through a succession of presbyters.

1

"When the bishops and presbyters came from Ephesus and the nearby cities and gathered in Miletus—because he was hurrying to Jerusalem to observe Pentecost—after testifying many things to them and declaring what would happen to him in Jerusalem, he added: "I know that you will see my face no more."

later in the same passage

"Be careful, then, both about yourselves and all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you bishops, to lead the Church of the Lord, which He has acquired for Himself through His own blood.""

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book III* (c. 175–202 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 20, page 9 Read it in the library ›

2

"But, again, when we refer them to the tradition that originates from the apostles and is preserved through the succession of presbyters in the Churches, they object to tradition, claiming they are wiser not only than the presbyters but even than the apostles, because they have discovered the unadulterated truth."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book III* (c. 175–202 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 21, page 9 Read it in the library ›

POINT 2 OF 8

Clement calls the same leaders bishops and presbyters

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

Clement of Rome says the apostles appointed bishops and deacons. When he writes about men wrongly removed at Corinth, he calls their office the episcopate, and in the next breath calls the faithful departed leaders presbyters. He seems to use both words for the same men.

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3 “Thus, preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first-fruits of their labors, having first proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who would later believe.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 48, page 10** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

4 “Our sin will not be small if we dismiss from the episcopate those who have fulfilled its duties blamelessly and holily.”

later in the same passage

“Blessed are those presbyters who, having completed their journey before now, have achieved a fruitful and perfect departure from this world; for they have no fear of being deprived of the place now appointed to them.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 47, page 10** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 3 OF 8

Clement's leaders were appointed with the church's consent

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement says later leaders were appointed with the consent of the whole church. He pictures several presbyters set over one flock, and he asks anyone causing division to step aside and do what the majority asks, so the church can have peace.

5 “We believe, therefore, that those appointed by them, or later by other distinguished men with the consent of the whole Church, who have served the flock of Christ blamelessly in a humble, peaceful, and selfless spirit, and have long enjoyed a good reputation with everyone, cannot be justly removed from the ministry.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 47, page 10** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

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6 “Let them declare, "If because of me there has been sedition, disagreement, and division, I will leave, I will go wherever you want, and I will do whatever the majority commands; only let the flock of Christ live in peace with the presbyters appointed over it."”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 49, page 10** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 8

Hermas and Polycarp speak of presbyters together

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Hermas speaks of the presbyters, plural, who preside over the church. Polycarp tells believers to be subject to the presbyters and deacons; this passage does not mention a single bishop.

7 “But you will read the words in this city, along with the presbyters who preside over the Church."”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Hermas,** *Shepherd* (c. 90–150 AD) **Source 4, page 8** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

8 “Therefore, it is necessary to abstain from all these things, being subject to the presbyters and deacons, as unto God and Christ.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Polycarp,** *Epistle to the Philippians* (c. 100–155 AD) **Source 16, page 8** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 5 OF 8

Ignatius describes one bishop with a council

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

In Ignatius's letters each church has one bishop, a body of presbyters, and deacons. He compares the presbyters to a council and to the apostles. He warns that nothing in church life should be done apart from the bishop.

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9 “In the same way, let everyone honor the deacons as an appointment of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father, and the presbyters as the council of God, and assembly of the apostles.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Trallians* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 6, page 8** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

10 “Let no one do anything related to the Church without the bishop.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 14, page 8** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 8

Justin mentions one leader at Sunday worship

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Justin describes Sunday worship where a leader gives thanks over the bread and cup and keeps the gifts for those in need, while the people answer Amen. He does not call this leader a bishop or say how many leaders a church had.

11 “Then, bread and a cup of wine mixed with water are brought to the leader of the brethren.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Justin Martyr,** *First Apology* (c. 130–165 AD) **Source 18, page 8** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

12 “Those who are well-off and willing give what they think is appropriate; the collection is deposited with the leader, who supports the orphans and widows, and those who, through illness or any other reason, are in need, as well as those who are imprisoned and the strangers living among us.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Justin Martyr,** *First Apology* (c. 130–165 AD) **Source 17, page 8** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

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POINT 7 OF 8

Cyprian wants bishops chosen before all the people

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Cyprian teaches that a bishop should be chosen in front of the people and approved by the vote and judgment of all. The Roman clergy, writing to Cyprian, agree with his plan to settle the case of the lapsed in a council of bishops, presbyters, deacons, confessors and faithful laity.

13

> "We also see that this comes from divine authority: a priest should be chosen in the presence of the people, under the eyes of all, and should be approved as worthy and suitable by public judgment and testimony."
>
> *later in the same passage*
>
> "That is, He teaches and shows that the ordination of priests should not be carried out except with the knowledge of the people standing nearby, so that in the presence of the people either the crimes of the wicked may be exposed, or the merits of the good may be made known, and the ordination, having been examined by the vote and judgment of all, may be just and legitimate."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Epistles* (c. 248–258 AD) *THF's updated English* **Source 32, page 9** **Read it in the library ›**

14

> "However, what you yourself have also said in so important a matter satisfies us: first, that the peace of the Church must be preserved; then, that when an assembly for counsel has been gathered, with bishops, presbyters, deacons, and confessors, as well as with the laity who stand firm, we should deal with the case of the lapsed."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Epistles* (c. 248–258 AD) *THF's updated English* **Source 34, page 9** **Read it in the library ›**

POINT 8 OF 8

Later texts give the bishop stronger power

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

The longer, later-expanded version of Ignatius's letter to the Trallians uses stronger words than the short version, giving the bishop power beyond all others, yet it still calls the presbyters his advisers. The Apostolic Constitutions, a later 4th-century text, still have the presbytery and the people asked whether they want the man as bishop.

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15 "For what is the bishop but one who possesses all power and authority beyond all others, as far as a man can possess it, who, according to his ability, has been made an imitator of the Christ of God?"

later in the same passage

"And what is the presbytery but a sacred assembly, the counselors and advisers of the bishop?"

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Trallians* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 5, page 8** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

16 "And let the chief of the bishops ask the presbytery and the people whether this is the man whom they desire as their ruler."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 39, page 10** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don't tell us

- These passages give no dates, so they cannot show exactly when or where each church moved to a single bishop.
- They do not discuss or compare the Greek words for elder and overseer.
- None of them pictures a bishop chosen without the church's consent, but they do not settle how much power a bishop held in every church.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 49 early Christian passages and 261 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–49, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 50–181, in Bible order), then 129 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF's updated English unless marked "1885 English" (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). "… [continues online]" marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

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EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *49 passages from 16 writers*

Hermas, *c. 90–150 AD · sources 1–4*

1 *Shepherd* (1885 English; on point 4) “square white stones which fitted exactly into each other, are apostles, bishops, teachers, and deacons, who have lived in godly purity, and have acted as bishops and teachers and deacons… [continues online] **read ›**

2 *Shepherd* (1885 English; on point 4) “the bishops never failed to protect, by their service, the widows, and those who were in want, and always maintained a holy conversation… [continues online] **read ›**

3 *Shepherd* (on point 4) and if none of you has perished. But if He finds any of these sheep wandering away, woe to the shepherds! And if the shepherds themselves have wandered away, what… [continues online] **read ›**

4 *Shepherd* **Quote 7, page 4** “you will read the words in this city, along with the presbyters who preside over the Church… [continues online] **read ›**

Ignatius of Antioch, *c. 98–117 AD · sources 5–14*

5 *Epistle to the Trallians* **Quote 15, page 7** but upon him who is humble and quiet and trembles at my words?" Also, you should reverence your bishop as Christ Himself, according to the instructions of the blessed apostles… [continues online] **read ›**

6 *Epistle to the Trallians* (1885 English) **Quote 9, page 5** “like manner, let all reverence the deacons as an appointment of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father, and the presbyters as… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (on point 5) “deacons to the presbyters; the presbyters to the bishop… [continues online] **read ›**

8 *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (1885 English; on point 5) “also the nearest Churches have sent, in some cases bishops, and in others presbyters and deacons… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (1885 English; on point 5) “also the nearest Churches have sent, in some cases bishops, and in others presbyters and deacons… [continues online] **read ›**

10 *Epistles of Ignatius* (1885 English; on point 5) “deacons, to the presbyters; and ye, the people, to the presbyters and the deacons… [continues online] **read ›**

11 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (on point 5) that you all follow the bishop, just as Christ Jesus does the Father, and the presbytery as you would the apostles. Also, show reverence to the deacons, as those who… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *Epistle to the Magnesians* (on point 5) but to show him full respect, honoring the authority of God the Father, as I have seen even holy elders do. They do not judge hastily based on their bishop… [continues online] **read ›**

13 *Epistles of Ignatius* (1885 English; on point 5) presbyters, “feed the flock which is among you,” till God shall show who is to hold the rule over you… [continues online] **read ›**

14 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* **Quote 10, page 5** that you all follow the bishop, just as Jesus Christ follows the Father, and the presbytery as you would the apostles; and respect the deacons as being the institution of… [continues online] **read ›**

Polycarp, *c. 100–155 AD · sources 15–16*

15 *Epistle to the Philippians* (1885 English; on point 4) the presbyters be compassionate and merciful to all, bringing back those that wander, visiting all the sick… [continues online] **read ›**

16 *Epistle to the Philippians* (1885 English) **Quote 8, page 4** “it is needful to abstain from all these things, being subject to the presbyters and deacons, as unto God and Christ… [continues online] **read ›**

Justin Martyr, *c. 130–165 AD · sources 17–18*

17 *First Apology* **Quote 12, page 5** “we continuously remind each other of these things. The wealthy among us help the needy, and we always stay together. For all things we are provided with, we bless the… [continues online] **read ›**

18 *First Apology* **Quote 11, page 5** “we, after we have washed the person who has been convinced and agreed to our teaching, bring them to the place where those called brethren are assembled, so that we… [continues online] **read ›**

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Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 19–21*

19 *Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenæus* (on point 1) together. Thus, the difference in observing the fast fosters the harmony of our shared faith. The presbyters before Soter who led the Church you now govern—namely, Anicetus, Pius, Hyginus… [continues online] **read ›**

20 *Against Heresies: Book III* (1885 English) **Quote 1, page 2** "heed, therefore, both to yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has placed you as bishops, to rule the Church of the Lord, which He has… [continues online] **read ›**

21 *Against Heresies: Book III* (1885 English) **Quote 2, page 2** "But, again, when we refer them to that tradition which originates from the apostles, [and] which is preserved by means of the succession of presbyters in the Churches, they object… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 22–24*

22 *Stromata* 3 "1 Timothy 5:14-15. Indeed, he certainly also accepts the husband of one wife, whether he is a presbyter or a deacon or a layman, using marriage without blame… [continues online] **read ›**

23 *Instructor* 1.6 (1885 English) "if we who preside over the Churches are shepherds after the image of the good Shepherd, and you the sheep, are we not to regard the Lord as preserving consistency… [continues online] **read ›**

24 *Stromata* 7.1 (1885 English) "also, in the Church, the elders attend to the department which has improvement for its object… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 25–27*

25 *De Fuga in Persecutione* 13 (1885 English) "the apostles, with so much foresight, make the office of overseer of this type, that the occupants might be able to enjoy their rule free from anxiety, under color of… [continues online] **read ›**

26 *On the Veiling of Virgins* 1 "is the only prelate, because He alone succeeds Christ… [continues online] **read ›**

27 *On Monogamy* 12 persons, he does not prescribe to all." Does it then also follow that he does not prescribe to bishops alone what he does enjoin upon all, if what he does… [continues online] **read ›**

Early Liturgies, *c. 200–400 AD · sources 28–29*

28 *Divine Liturgy of St. Mark* 1 "all the orthodox bishops, elders, deacons, sub-deacons, readers, singers, and laity… [continues online] **read ›**

29 *Divine Liturgy of St. Mark* 1 "the orthodox bishops everywhere, the elders, deacons, sub-deacons, readers, singers… [continues online] **read ›**

Hippolytus, *c. 200–236 AD · source 30*

30 *Against the Heresy of Noetus* 1 He claimed that he himself was Moses, and that Aaron was his brother. When the blessed presbyters heard this, they called him before the Church and questioned him. But at… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · source 31*

31 *Commentary on Matthew* 11 (1885 English) "the same also you will say about the elders and deacons… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 32–37*

32 *Epistles* **Quote 13, page 6** a priest be appointed in the presence of all the assembly. That is, He teaches and shows that the ordination of priests should not be carried out except with the… [continues online] **read ›**

33 *Epistles* (on point 7) Cyprian to the presbyters and deacons and people living at Furni, greetings. I and my colleagues who were present with me were greatly troubled, dearest brothers, and so were the… [continues online] **read ›**

34 *Epistles* (1885 English) **Quote 14, page 6** "that an assembly for counsel being gathered together, with bishops, presbyters, deacons, and confessors, as well as with the laity who stand fast, we should deal with the case of… [continues online] **read ›**

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35 *Epistles* (on point 7) we add this and join it to what we have said, with common agreement and authority: if any presbyters or deacons, who were previously ordained in the Catholic Church, later… [continues online] **read ›**

36 *Epistles* (on point 7) “But deacons ought to remember that the Lord chose apostles, that is, bishops and overseers… [continues online] **read ›**

37 *Epistles* (on point 7) “greater or more fitting duty do overseers have than to care, with careful concern and healing medicine, for the nourishing and keeping of the sheep? For the Lord speaks and… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 38–43*

38 *Apostolic Constitutions* “the bishops and the presbyters are the priests… [continues online] **read ›**

39 *Apostolic Constitutions* **Quote 16, page 7** chosen vessel, our fellow apostle, is present with us, and James the bishop, and the rest of the presbyters, and the seven deacons. First, therefore, I Peter say that a… [continues online] **read ›**

40 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 8) “Concerning the ordination of presbyters, I who am loved by the Lord… [continues online] **read ›**

41 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 8) He lays on hands, ordains, offers, and receives the blessing from bishops, but never from presbyters. A bishop removes from office any clergyman who deserves removal, except a bishop, because… [continues online] **read ›**

42 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 8) have already said, that a bishop, a presbyter, and a deacon, when they are constituted, must be but once married, whether their wives be alive or whether they be dead… [continues online] **read ›**

43 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 8) “same apostle's canons concerning bishops, presbyters, deacons, and the rest of the clergy… [continues online] **read ›**

Malchion, *c. 260–280 AD · source 44*

44 *Epistle Against Paul of Samosata* 1 Dionysius and Maximus, and to all our fellow ministers throughout the world—both bishops and presbyters and deacons—and to the whole Catholic Church under heaven: Helenus, Hymenaeus, Theophilus, Theotecnus… [continues online] **read ›**

Archelaus, *c. 270–300 AD · source 45*

45 *Disputation with Manes* 1 “is, the foundation of the Church, and has put us in trust of the law, appointing ministers and presbyters and bishops in it. He also describes, in the places assigned… [continues online] **read ›**

Peter of Alexandria, *c. 300–311 AD · source 46*

46 *Canonical Epistle* think carefully about what this great father and holy martyr sets forth here, those who say that bishops may give up their Sees and still keep the dignity of the… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Rome · *sources 47–49*

47 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English) **Quotes 4, 5, page 3** “are of opinion, therefore, that those appointed by them, or afterwards by other eminent men, with the consent of the whole Church, and who have blamelessly served the flock of… [continues online] **read ›**

48 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Quote 3, page 3** “Thus, preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first-fruits of… [continues online] **read ›**

49 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English) **Quote 6, page 4** “let the flock of Christ live on terms of peace with the presbyters set over it.” He that acts thus shall procure to himself great glory in the Lord… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *132 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

50 **Genesis 43:33** They sat before him, the firstborn according to his seniority and the youngest according to his youth, and the men were amazed, each looking at his brother. **read ›**

51 **Leviticus 4:15** The elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the calf before the Lord, and they shall slaughter the calf before the Lord. **read ›**

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52 **Leviticus 16:32** The priest whom they anoint, and whose hands they consecrate to serve as priest after his father, shall make atonement; he shall put on the linen garment, the holy garment. **read ›**

53 **Leviticus 21:10** And the high priest among his brothers, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured, and who has been consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor tear his garments; **read ›**

54 **Numbers 11:16** Then the Lord said to Moses, “Gather to me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you yourself know to be elders of the people and their scribes; and bring them to the tabernacle of witness, and they shall stand there with you. **read ›**

55 **Numbers 11:24** So Moses went out and spoke the words of the Lord to the people; and he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and set them all around the tabernacle. **read ›**

56 **Numbers 15:23** just as the Lord commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day the Lord gave the command to you and onward throughout your generations, **read ›**

57 **Numbers 27:16** “Let the Lord God of the spirits and of all flesh select a man over this congregation, **read ›**

58 **Numbers 27:17** who shall go out before them and who shall come in before them, who shall lead them out and who shall bring them in, so that the congregation of the Lord may not be like sheep that have no shepherd.” **read ›**

59 **2 Samuel 23:19** Of those three he was the most honored, and he became their chief; but he did not attain to the three. **read ›**

60 **1 Chronicles 9:13** and their brothers, heads of the houses of their families, one thousand seven hundred and sixty, mighty men of valor for the work of the service of the house of God. **read ›**

61 **1 Chronicles 11:21** Of the three he was more honored than the two, and he was their ruler; but he did not attain to the three. **read ›**

62 **1 Chronicles 23:28** for he appointed them at the side of Aaron, to minister in the house of the Lord, over the courts, and over the chambers, and over the purification of all the holy things, and over the works of the service of the house of God; **read ›**

63 **1 Chronicles 27:31** And over the sheep was Jaziz the Hagrite. All these were overseers of the possessions of King David. **read ›**

64 **2 Chronicles 34:13** And they were over the burden-bearers and over all who did the work in every kind of service; and of the Levites there were scribes, judges, and gatekeepers. **read ›**

65 **2 Chronicles 35:2** He set the priests in their charges and strengthened them for the works of the house of the Lord. **read ›**

66 **Ezra 1:2** “Thus says Cyrus king of the Persians: The Lord God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he himself has charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judea. **read ›**

67 **Ezra 7:2** the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, **read ›**

68 **Ezra 9:4** Then everyone who followed the word of the God of Israel gathered to me because of the faithlessness of the exiles; and I sat still in silence until the evening sacrifice. **read ›**

69 **Ezra 9:12** Now therefore do not give your daughters to their sons, and do not take their daughters for your sons; and you shall never seek their peace or their good, so that you may be strong and eat the good things of the land and leave it as an inheritance to your sons forever.’ **read ›**

70 **Nehemiah 10:14** The rulers of the people: Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Zattu; (Septuagint 2 Esdras 20:15 (Nehemiah 10:14 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

71 **Proverbs 8:15** By me kings reign, and rulers write decrees of righteousness. **read ›**

72 **Proverbs 11:27** He who devises good things seeks good favor, but evil will overtake him who seeks it. **read ›**

73 **Proverbs 14:19** The evil will fall before the good, and the ungodly will wait at the doors of the righteous. **read ›**

74 **Proverbs 14:35** A servant with understanding is acceptable to a king, and by his good conduct he removes dishonor. **read ›**

75 **Proverbs 16:24** Good words are honeycombs, and their sweetness is healing for the soul. **read ›**

76 **Song of Solomon 6:1** Where has your kinsman gone, O beautiful one among women? Where has your kinsman turned his gaze? And we will seek him with you. **read ›**

77 **Isaiah 7:5** And as for the son of Aram and the son of Remaliah, because they have counseled an evil counsel, **read ›**

78 **Isaiah 7:10** And the Lord spoke again to Ahaz, saying, **read ›**

79 **Ezekiel 24:2** Son of man, write down for yourself a day, from this day on which the king of Babylon leaned against Jerusalem, from this very day. **read ›**

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80 **Ezekiel 34:2** Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord God: O shepherds of Israel, do shepherds feed themselves? Do not the shepherds feed the sheep? **read ›**

81 **Hosea 12:11** If it is not Gilead, then the rulers in Gilead were false when they sacrificed, and their altars were like tortoises on the dry ground of the field. (Septuagint Hosea 12:12 (Hosea 12:11 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

82 **1 Esdras 1:2** having set the priests in their robes by their daily courses in the temple of the Lord. **read ›**

83 **1 Esdras 7:2** supervised the holy works very carefully, working together with the elders of the Jews and the temple officials. **read ›**

84 **1 Esdras 8:46** commanding them to speak to Loddaeus and his brothers and the treasurers at that place, to send us men to serve as priests in the house of our Lord. **read ›**

85 **1 Esdras 9:4** and that whoever did not come within two or three days, according to the judgment of the ruling elders, should have his cattle given over to the temple, and he himself should be cut off from the multitude of the captivity. **read ›**

86 **1 Esdras 9:12** Let the leaders of the multitude stay, and let all those of our settlements who have foreign wives come at an appointed time, **read ›**

87 **Wisdom of Sirach 7:14** Do not babble in a multitude of elders, and do not repeat a word in your prayer. **read ›**

88 **Wisdom of Sirach 10:20** Among brothers their leader is honored, and those who fear the Lord in his eyes. **read ›**

89 **Susanna 1:34** And the two elders stood up in the midst of the people and laid their hands on her head. **read ›**

90 **Susanna 1:50** And all the people returned in haste. And the elders said to him, “Come, sit among us and inform us, for God has given you the standing of an elder.” **read ›**

91 **1 Maccabees 1:51** In accordance with all these words he wrote to his whole kingdom, and he appointed overseers over all the people, and he commanded the cities of Judah to sacrifice, city by city. **read ›**

92 **1 Maccabees 8:15** And they have made a senate house for themselves, and every day three hundred and twenty counselors deliberate continually about the people, to keep them in good order; **read ›**

93 **1 Maccabees 10:38** And as for the three districts that were added to Judea from the country of Samaria, let them be added to Judea, so that they may be reckoned to be under one man and obey no other authority but the high priest’s. **read ›**

94 **1 Maccabees 11:27** He confirmed him in the high priesthood and in all the other honors he had held before, and had him counted among his first friends. **read ›**

95 **1 Maccabees 14:19** And these were read before the assembly in Jerusalem. **read ›**

96 **1 Maccabees 14:35** The people saw Simon’s deeds and the glory he planned to bring to his nation, and they made him their leader and high priest, because he had done all these things, and for the righteousness and the faithfulness he had kept toward his nation, and because he sought in every way to exalt his people. **read ›**

97 **1 Maccabees 14:38** And King Demetrius confirmed him in the high priesthood accordingly, **read ›**

98 **1 Maccabees 14:41** and that the Jews and the priests were well pleased that Simon should be their leader and high priest forever, until a faithful prophet should arise; **read ›**

99 **1 Maccabees 14:42** and that he should be general over them, and that he should take charge of the sanctuary, to appoint men over its works and over the country and over the weapons and over the strongholds; **read ›**

100 **1 Maccabees 14:47** Simon accepted, and agreed to be high priest, and to be general and ethnarch of the Jews and of the priests, and to preside over them all. **read ›**

101 **1 Maccabees 16:24** behold, these are written in the book of the days of his high priesthood, from the time he became high priest after his father. **read ›**

102 **2 Maccabees 4:29** Menelaus left his own brother Lysimachus as deputy in the high priesthood, and Sostratus left Crates, who was over the Cyprians. **read ›**

103 **3 Maccabees 2:30** But so that he might not appear hostile to all, he wrote underneath: “But if any of them choose to live among those initiated into the rites, these shall have citizenship equal to the Alexandrians.” **read ›**

104 **3 Maccabees 6:1** Then a certain Eleazar, a man of note among the priests of the country, who had already reached old age and was adorned with every virtue in his life, quieted the elders around him who were calling on the holy God, and prayed as follows: **read ›**

105 **4 Maccabees 7:5** For father Eleazar, spreading out his mind like a jutting headland, broke the raging waves of the passions. **read ›**

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106 **4 Maccabees 7:10** O aged man more vigorous than tortures, elder more powerful than fire, greatest king over the passions, Eleazar! **read ›**

107 **1 Enoch 9:5** For you made all things, and you have all authority, and all things are plain and uncovered before you, and you see all things. **read ›**

108 **1 Enoch 40:6** And I heard the third voice praying and interceding for those who dwell on the earth, and pleading in the name of the Lord of Spirits. **read ›**

109 **1 Enoch 89:18** And the sheep went to the wolves according to the word of the Lord, and another sheep met it and went with it, and the two went and entered together into the assembly of those wolves, and spoke with them and warned them not to touch the sheep from then on. **read ›**

110 **1 Enoch 89:19** And at that I saw the wolves, and how they oppressed the sheep exceedingly with all their power; and the sheep cried aloud. **read ›**

111 **1 Enoch 89:22** And the Lord of the sheep went with them as their leader, and all his sheep followed him; and his face was dazzling and glorious and terrible to behold. **read ›**

112 **1 Enoch 89:29** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

113 **1 Enoch 89:36** And I saw in this vision until that sheep became a man and built a house for the Lord of the sheep, and placed all the sheep in that house. **read ›**

114 **1 Enoch 89:39** And I watched until they stopped crying for that sheep and crossed that stream of water, and there arose the two sheep as leaders in the place of those which had led them and fallen asleep. **read ›**

115 **1 Enoch 89:59** And he called seventy shepherds, and cast those sheep to them that they might pasture them, and he spoke to the shepherds and their companions, “Let each one of you pasture the sheep from now on, and everything that I shall command you, that you shall do. **read ›**

116 **1 Enoch 89:65** And I watched until those shepherds pastured in their season, and they began to slay and to destroy more than they were commanded, and they delivered those sheep into the hand of the lions. **read ›**

117 **1 Enoch 89:68** And the shepherds and their associates delivered over those sheep to all the wild beasts, to devour them, and each one of them received in his time a definite number; how many of them each one destroyed was written by the other in a book. **read ›**

118 **1 Enoch 90:1** I saw until, in this way, thirty-five shepherds had undertaken the pasturing of the sheep, and each of them completed his period as the first had done; and others received them into their hands to pasture them for their period, each shepherd in his own period. **read ›**

119 **1 Enoch 90:2** After that I saw in my vision all the birds of heaven coming, the eagles, the vultures, the kites, the ravens; but the eagles led all the birds. They began to devour those sheep, and to pick out their eyes and to devour their flesh. **read ›**

120 **1 Enoch 90:4** I saw until those sheep were devoured by the dogs and eagles and kites, and they left neither flesh nor skin nor tendon remaining on them, until only their bones stood there; and their bones too fell to the earth, and the sheep became few. **read ›**

121 **1 Enoch 90:22** He spoke to that man who wrote before him, who was one of those seven white ones, and said to him: “Take those seventy shepherds to whom I delivered the sheep, and who, taking them on their own authority, slew more than I commanded them.” **read ›**

122 **Matthew 2:6** ‘You Bethlehem, land of Judah, are in no way least among the princes of Judah; for out of you shall come a leader who shall shepherd my people, Israel.’” **read ›**

123 **Mark 10:44** And whoever among you wishes to be first shall be slave of all. **read ›**

124 **Luke 22:26** But you shall not be so. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. **read ›**

125 **John 10:2** But one who enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. **read ›**

126 **John 10:12** He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming, leaves the sheep, and flees. The wolf snatches the sheep and scatters them. **read ›**

127 **John 10:16** I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one flock, one shepherd. **read ›**

128 **Acts 1:20** “For it is written in the book of Psalms: Let his dwelling be made desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it; and: Let another take his office of overseer. **read ›**

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129 **Acts 3:2** A man lame from his mother's womb was being carried. They laid him daily at the temple gate called Beautiful to ask alms from those entering the temple. **read ›**

130 **Acts 3:3** Seeing Peter and John about to enter the temple, he asked for alms. **read ›**

131 **Acts 6:3** Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this work. **read ›**

132 **Acts 6:6** whom they set before the apostles. When they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. **read ›**

133 **Acts 9:14** Here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name." **read ›**

134 **Acts 11:30** which they also did, sending it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. **read ›**

135 **Acts 13:8** But Elymas the sorcerer—for that is how his name is translated—opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. **read ›**

136 **Acts 14:23** They appointed elders for them in every church and, after prayer with fasting, commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. **read ›**

137 **Acts 15:6** The apostles and the elders were gathered together to see about this matter. **read ›**

138 **Acts 15:22** Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas: Judas called Barsabbas and Silas, leading men among the brothers. **read ›**

139 **Acts 16:4** As they passed through the cities, they delivered the decrees decided by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for them to observe. **read ›**

140 **Acts 20:17** From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and summoned the elders of the church. **read ›**

141 **Acts 20:28** Therefore pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock among whom the Holy Spirit has made you bishops, to shepherd the church of the Lord and God, which he purchased with his own blood. **read ›**

142 **Acts 20:29** For I know that after my departure, vicious wolves will enter in among you, not sparing the flock. **read ›**

143 **Acts 21:18** The day following, Paul went in with us to James; and all the elders were present. **read ›**

144 **Romans 3:15** their feet are swift to shed blood; **read ›**

145 **Romans 12:4** For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members do not have the same function, **read ›**

146 **Romans 12:10** In love of the brothers be tenderly affectionate to one another; in honor prefer one another, **read ›**

147 **1 Corinthians 7:17** Only, as God has apportioned to each, as the Lord has called each, so let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches. **read ›**

148 **1 Corinthians 10:3** and all ate the same spiritual food; **read ›**

149 **1 Corinthians 12:5** There are various kinds of service, and the same Lord. **read ›**

150 **1 Corinthians 12:28** God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, and kinds of tongues. **read ›**

151 **1 Corinthians 14:29** Let two or three of the prophets speak, and let the others discern. **read ›**

152 **2 Corinthians 11:5** For I reckon that I am not at all behind the very best apostles. **read ›**

153 **Ephesians 4:5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **read ›**

154 **Ephesians 4:11** He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, shepherds and teachers; **read ›**

155 **Philippians 1:1** Paul and Timothy, slaves of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: **read ›**

156 **Colossians 1:18** He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might have the preeminence. **read ›**

157 **1 Thessalonians 5:12** Now we ask you, brothers, to recognize those who labor among you and lead you in the Lord and admonish you, **read ›**

158 **1 Timothy 3:1** The saying is trustworthy: if anyone aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a good work. **read ›**

159 **1 Timothy 3:2** The bishop therefore must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, orderly, hospitable, able to teach; **read ›**

160 **1 Timothy 3:10** Let them also first be tested; then let them serve if they are blameless. **read ›**

161 **1 Timothy 3:12** Let deacons be husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. **read ›**

162 **1 Timothy 4:14** Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the elders. **read ›**

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163 **1 Timothy 5:1** Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father; the younger men as brothers; **read ›**

164 **1 Timothy 5:2** the older women as mothers, the younger women as sisters, in all purity. **read ›**

165 **1 Timothy 5:17** Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching. **read ›**

166 **1 Timothy 5:19** Do not receive an accusation against an elder except at the word of two or three witnesses. **read ›**

167 **1 Timothy 5:21** I command you in the sight of God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the chosen angels, that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing by partiality. **read ›**

168 **Titus 1:5** I left you in Crete for this reason, that you would set in order the things that were lacking and appoint elders in every city, as I directed you— **read ›**

169 **Titus 1:7** For a bishop must be blameless as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for dishonest gain, **read ›**

170 **Titus 2:2** that older men be temperate, dignified, sober-minded, sound in faithfulness, love, and perseverance; **read ›**

171 **Hebrews 7:7** But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater. **read ›**

172 **Hebrews 10:21** and having a great priest over God's house, **read ›**

173 **Hebrews 13:7** Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Considering the outcome of their way of life, imitate their faithfulness. **read ›**

174 **Hebrews 13:17** Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they watch on behalf of your souls, as those who will give account, that they may do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be unprofitable for you. **read ›**

175 **Hebrews 13:20** Now may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an eternal covenant, our Lord Jesus, **read ›**

176 **James 5:14** Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; **read ›**

177 **1 Peter 2:25** For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. **read ›**

178 **1 Peter 5:1** I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings, and a partaker of the glory to be revealed: **read ›**

179 **1 Peter 5:2** shepherd the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion, but voluntarily; not for dishonest gain, but willingly; **read ›**

180 **1 Peter 5:3** not as lording it over those entrusted to you, but making yourselves examples to the flock. **read ›**

181 **1 Peter 5:4** When the chief Shepherd is revealed, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *129 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Genesis 4:25

Leviticus 15:18

Deuteronomy 8:18 · 20:5 · 20:19

Proverbs 4:23 · 8:27 · 9:17

Ecclesiastes 3:1

Song of Solomon 2:16

Isaiah 50:9 · 60:17 · 63:3

Jeremiah 1:5 · 23:24

Hosea 7:2

Matthew 4:10 · 5:6 · 5:42 · 6:1 · 6:12 · 6:19 · 6:24 · 7:21 · 10:5 · 11:5 · 15:18 · 15:20 · 18:3 · 18:20 · 19:6 · 19:14 · 20:28 · 23:8 · 23:9 · 24:11

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Mark 4:28 · 7:9 · 9:50 · 10:43 · 14:71 · 16:17

Luke 6:46 · 10:16 · 10:20 · 11:23 · 12:47 · 12:50 · 16:9 · 20:25 · 20:27 · 20:34

John 3:6 · 6:27 · 6:34 · 14:6 · 14:26 · 16:12 · 16:13 · 17:6 · 17:11 · 20:22

Acts 1:8 · 2:42

Romans 2:15 · 7:4 · 7:12 · 11:4 · 12:17 · 13:14 · 14:10 · 14:12 · 14:19 · 14:21

1 Corinthians 1:9 · 1:31 · 6:9 · 6:10 · 6:12 · 6:18 · 7:5 · 7:8 · 7:9 · 7:14 · 7:32 · 7:39 · 9:25 · 10:26 · 12:8 · 13:5 · 14:21 · 15:6

2 Corinthians 5:10 · 8:21 · 10:17 · 11:3

Galatians 3:27 · 4:4 · 5:13 · 5:16 · 5:17 · 6:7

Ephesians 2:20 · 4:2

Philippians 1:18 · 1:27 · 2:2 · 3:16 · 4:3 · 4:8

Colossians 2:20

1 Timothy 3:8 · 4:1 · 4:3 · 5:9 · 5:14

2 Timothy 2:12 · 2:20 · 3:8 · 4:6

Titus 1:6

Hebrews 6:6 · 11:40 · 12:24 · 13:5

James 2:13

1 Peter 2:5 · 2:11

1 John 2:27

Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “Were elders and bishops the same office in the early church?” on October 2, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

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